WE WILL BURY YOU

THE SOVIET PLAN FOR THE SUBVERSION OF THE WEST BY THE HIGHEST RANKING COMMUNIST EVER TO DEFECT

JAN SEJNA

If you don't like us, don't accept our invitations, and don't invite us to come and see you. Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you.

Nikita Khrushchev, at a reception in the Kremlin, 17 November 1956.

'If ever a system totally corrupted its servants, that was and is Communism; and when Communism is imposed by a foreign power as brutal and chauvinist as the Soviet Union, it not only corrupts, it degrades. In these necessarily sketchy and incomplete memoirs I hope to convey something of the atmosphere surrounding a senior Party official in a Soviet satellite regime.'

Jan Sejna, former Chief of Staff to the Minister of Defence in Czechoslovakia and Assistant Secretary to the top secret Czech Defence Council, a position of enormous power, is the highest ranking Communist ever to defect. His advancement in Prague was rapid. By the age of twenty-seven he was a Colonel, a Commissar, a Member of Parliament, and a member of the Central Committee of the Czech Communist Party. He became a General when he was forty.

His descriptions of life in the top echelons of military power behind the Iron Curtain and his anecdotes about the leading figures of the Communist world with whom he dealt, including Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Novotny, and the Soviet Military High Command, are vivid and unique. But what makes this book truly remarkable is that Sejna had access to a detailed Soviet plan to subvert the West country by country. A large proportion of the book is a sensational synopsis of this Strategic Plan, published here for the first time.

Sejna defected in February 1968. 'In the years since I left Prague the Plan will have changed in detail,' Sejna writes, 'because each section is subject to constant revision to take into account the new factors introduced by changes in the world's political forces. Despite these variations, I know that the essence of the Plan will be unchanged... however flexible and pragmatic Soviet policy appears, it is essentially directed towards the achievements of the Plan's objectives-objectives which have been, are and will remain utterly inimical to and subversive of the freedoms enjoyed by the states of the Western world.'

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My parents working on a collective farm

With enlisted men of the 51st Engineering Brigade in Litomerice. A propaganda photograph taken during a political meeting

At a meeting of the Collegium of the Minister of Defence and a Bulgarian delegation in 1963 with Ludvik Svoboda, Miroslav Smoldas, Vaclav Prchlik, the Minister of Defence Bohumir Lomsky, Aleksandr Kuschev, Otakar Rytir, and Vladimir Janko

With Oldrich Chernik, the East German military attache, and a Lao military delegation in Czechoslovakia

With a Czech military delegation in Bulgaria, 1963

May Day parade in Litomerice, 1967. I am making a speech to 45,000 people as Member of the Presidium of Parliament.

Joseph Smrkovsky with his dog Rap in Prague (*Stern)*

Celebrating the birthday of President's son Antonin Novotny in the wine cellars of a state farm in Litomerice

With my grandson Mirek during the building of my summer house in the West

May 1968. A triumphant Dubcek with President Ludvik Svoboda beside him in Prague *(Stern)*

March 1971. Dubcek stands unrecognized in Bratislava for a bus to work *(Stern)*

Preface

I slipped out of Prague one freezing Sunday morning in February 1968 and, with my son and his fiancee, drove as fast as the wintry roads would let me south-east through Hungary and Yugoslavia into Italy; I was fleeing like a criminal from the country I loved, and abandoning the system that had raised me from poverty to power and privilege.

Often I look back across the years and think about my friends and colleagues in pre-Dubcek Czechoslovakia. Most of us were ambitious, some of us were cruel and some were vain, others were corrupt and cowardly, and a few were simply naive. But I am sure that all of us - ministers, generals, commissars, and mere Party members - were trapped in the system, unable to act or move or even think outside it. It has become fashionable in Britain and the U.S., whenever some young delinquent or criminal is brought to trial, to argue that we should lay the blame on society. 'We are all guilty,' is the cry. 'It is the fault of the system.' But if ever a system totally corrupted its servants, that was and is Communism; and when Communism is imposed by a foreign power as brutal and chauvinist as the Soviet Union, it not only corrupts, it degrades. In these necessarily sketchy and incomplete memoirs I hope to convey something of the atmosphere surrounding a senior Party official in a Soviet satellite regime. I hope, too, that this book gives some insight into Soviet outlook and policy towards the West, not least through the detailed synopsis of the Soviet Strategic Plan for the subversion of the West, which I have included in the second half of this volume.

Jan Sejna

1

Peasant Boy to Party Boss

The tiny hamlet of Libotyn lies deep in the great Bohemian forest known to Czechs as the Shumawa, some fifteen miles from the Bavarian frontier. When I knew it, it consisted of a mere twenty-seven houses, in one of which - a single-storey cottage of stone and timber with a roof of thatch - I was born on 12 May 1927.

My parents were poor peasant farmers, though the forest provided little good land for farming - barely enough to support the two cows which were all the livestock we possessed. In order to survive, my mother and father had to work for some of the larger and richer farmers in the district. In addition, my father, who was a skilled carpenter, worked in Prague and the surrounding villages in the summer. He was the tenth of a family of eleven children and my grandmother's favourite, which is how he came to inherit the family property in the shape of our miserable holding. As a youth he had wanted to study painting, but his father was too poor to pay for it, and so he had turned to carpentry instead. He was a cultured man, entirely self-educated. He read a great deal and, despite our poverty, amassed a sizeable collection of books and organized an outdoor library for the village. With his versatile talents he not only carved and painted an altarpiece for the neighbouring village church, but improvised a theatre for performances by the local children in our village cafe-restaurant. My father was director, producer and scene designer for every show. All through the winter - we had snow from October to May - he worked at home at his carving and painting.

Our village, although tiny, had a long history of artistic talent

dating back several hundred years. There was scarcely a house without some attractive wood caning on its facade or a skilfully decorated interior. But there were few comforts, material or spiritual. There was no electricity and no radio; our only news of the outside world came via the postman who brought the newspapers. There was no church and no school, but there was a cafe, for Czechs can't live without beer. The deprivations hardly worried us children, except that from the age of six we had to walk five kilometres through the forest to school in the next village. This meant starting out at 5 a.m., stumbling through darkness and snow in winter. The forest provided us with an ideal playground, and in summer with a welcome supplement to our poor diet in the form of mushrooms, blackberries, and wild strawberries, for most of the village lived at subsistence level.

I was an only son. My grandparents lived with us and we all ate and, in winter, slept together in one large room, warmed by a cast-iron stove which stood in the centre. In summer my grandparents would retire at night to a small unheated side room which we sometimes used to put up visitors. We were a devout Catholic family, like all the others in the village. Every Sunday my grandfather would walk me to church in the next village. He himself preferred to drink beer in the nearby cafe, however, while I attended the service. On the way home I always had to repeat the sermon to him so that he could convince my grandmother he had in fact been to church.

My mother came from the neighbourhood, but as a girl she had worked for a time in Prague as a maid for a middle-class family. She shared my father's love of literature and was the most hard-working woman I have ever known. She never seemed able to relax and was always busy in some way, trying to earn enough money to feed us. She was almost blind from sewing and needlework, straining her eyes in the poor light of our lamps. I loved her as I have loved no one else. She was severe with me as a child, and would beat me if I misbehaved, but she was always just; she was also totally honest and quite incapable of lying. I not only loved her deeply but was inordinately proud of her. In spite of her poverty she always looked well dressed - she made her own clothes of course - and always tidy and clean, even after labouring on the farm and cleaning the house.

She had enormous strength of character and courage. In spite of all the privations and hardships of her life, I only twice saw her cry.

The second time was after the German invasion of 1939, when her brother, my Uncle Vasek, disappeared and she thought he had been taken by the Gestapo. The first time was when I was four years old; we were starving and there was no food for us. Years afterwards she told me how I had tried to comfort her: 'When I am big I will take care of you,' I had promised, and this is one promise I am proud of having kept. Nevertheless, I am sad to recall that when I defected to the West I could not bring myself to tell her of my plans - I knew she would die of fear for me. I dared not even visit her before I left because I felt sure I would break down and tell her, or she would instinctively guess that she would not see me again. As it was, I am very much afraid that my departure hastened her death.

Influenced and encouraged by my parents' love of reading and endowed with a certain intellectual ability, I finished my village school-days at the top of my class. My mother and father made still greater sacrifices to send me to a secondary school in the nearest town. This was at Strakonice in South Bohemia, and involved a seven-kilometre walk through the forest to the station, followed by an hour's train journey. One of my parents would accompany me to the station, where I would change from the clogs made by my father into my only pair of walking shoes - I could not face the ridicule that would greet me if I stumped into school wearing clogs. As it was, I had a rough time at first, partly because of my peasant ways - the other boys were all from the town - and partly because I was the smallest boy in the class. Luckily for me, my classmates soon found a better butt for their teasing when a new boy who had a glass eye joined us.

My family were all staunch Social Democrats. In those days it was virtually impossible to find a Czech of any class who was not politically minded. Uncle Vasek, my mother's brother, was a particularly vocal member of the party. A great hero of mine, he had fought during the First World War with the Czech Legion in Russia and travelled half way round the world to come home. As an outspoken opponent of the Sudetenland Nazi Party, he was an obvious target for the Germans after they occupied our country in March 1939. Warned that they were about to arrest him, he disappeared one night and fled across the Polish frontier, killing a Gestapo officer who tried to stop him. Poland was still free then, but in Ostrava Uncle Vasek

committed a fatal indiscretion. He wrote to his seventeen-year-old son, begging him to join him in Poland. The Gestapo intercepted the letter and arrested the boy. Three weeks later my aunt received a parcel containing her son's clothes, freshly laundered, and a note which bluntly stated, 'Your son died in a concentration camp.'

Further tragedy followed. My father's brother had married a Jewess whose family were ardent Communists. In 1940 twelve of them were arrested and murdered - one eleven-year-old girl was thrown into a sack and sent by rail to Germany, freezing to death on the way. A year later my uncle and aunt were sent to a concentration camp, where they remained until the Red Army freed them in 1945; their children came to live with us.

Inevitably, the Gestapo came to investigate my own parents, and in 1941 they ordered my headmaster to expel me from school; he had no choice, and in fact soon afterwards the school itself was closed following nation-wide student demonstrations. So ended my formal education.

For the next three years I worked as a labourer on one of the larger neighbouring farms. Then I found ajob in a small foundry repairing farm equipment. In January 1945, as the Russians approached, I was pressed into service by the Germans, along with other young men from the area, and sent to the mountains of Moravia to build bunkers and anti-tank ditches. At first we worked for the Heimwehr, supervised by old men and invalids unfit for active service, but after a month we left for the Polish-Czech frontier to construct anti-tank defences for the Wehrmacht within sound of the firing line.

Conditions were very hard there. We slept in lice-infested blankets on the floor of a school, which we shared with a detachment of Hitler Youth, though we had little contact with them. Most of my companions were boys aged fifteen or sixteen. We were fed a diet of boiled potatoes and carrots with a little *ersatz* coffee. I was lucky in being sent to work in the forest, where I soon made friends with the local farmers who gave me occasional meals and extra food. With their help I planned my escape.

The main difficulty was to get through the German checkpoints and guards, which were numerous around our camp as well as on all main roads, railways, and buses. However, early in April, one of the farmers loaded me into a horse-drawn cart, giving me plenty of food and valuable advice about safe routes in the direction of home.

Hidden in the cart I passed through the guard posts, and some way from the camp I started walking on my own. I walked for many miles through the forest, along rough paths and neglected side roads, without being challenged; in all it took me three weeks. When I was near home I abandoned caution and allowed myself the luxury of a three-hour train ride. I came home to a surprised and ecstatic welcome from my parents. They made me hide in the attic for another fortnight, however, until the German surrender.

One of the first moves of the new Czechoslovak Government was to decree the expropriation of all Sudeten German property and the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans from the country. The Communist Party, which was participating in the National Coalition Government under President Eduard Benes, proclaimed that this was a purely Communist achievement and urged all of us poor farmers to move to the Sudetenland and take over the rich holdings there. Like most Czechs, we shed no tears over the fate of the Sudetan Germans, but my father at first demurred when we suggested we should move.

'What if the Germans should come back?' he asked.

'Nobody else is frightened but you,' stormed my mother. 'You're just old and set in your dull ways!'

She pointed to the hillside above the village, where our tiny fields crowded among the rocks. 'You can't bring yourself to leave these wretched stones where even potatoes won't grow!'

I was determined to find us a better farm, and so one night in the spring of 1946 I left home with some food and money from my mother, and set off for the Sudetenland. When I arrived at the Land Office in the small village of Vitani, some sixty kilometres northwest of Prague, I found that the best properties had already been taken; the process had started the previous autumn and priority had been given to the Czech Corps which had fought with the Red Army. However, I thought myself lucky to obtain a farm of twenty-eight acres with two horses, ten cows, and a house with three spacious rooms - a country estate compared to my father's patch. The former owners, an old German couple with three grown-up daughters, were still there awaiting repatriation. Strangely, they showed no resentment towards me; perhaps they were happy enough to be handing over to a farmer's son and not one of the horde of

carpetbaggers who had flooded there from the cities to strip them in 1945. For ten months, until my parents came to join me, I worked with this family on my new farm like any hired hand and became so fond of them that I was seriously worried about their future when at last they left.

Among our most persistent visitors after my parents arrived was the Chairman of the Local District Committee of the Communist Party.

'Are you Party members?' he asked us. 'I recommend you all to join; we are all Communists here.' When my father expressed doubts, the Chairman pressed him.

'By whose efforts do you think you got this house and farm?' he asked, and answered himself. 'By the efforts of the Communist Party!'

We filled in our application form for membership, my father with some misgiving. However, he duly hung a portrait of Stalin on the wall to join those we already had of Christ, the Madonna, and President Benes. Personally, I had no misgivings and became an enthusiastic Party member, for I truly believed it was through the Communists that our fortunes had improved. But my father gave me a prophetic warning.

'Listen to me, Jan. I know a lot about Marxism and I can tell you that one day, sooner or later, all this land will be collectivized.'

Most of the new arrivals joined the Party. As I was one of the very few with any secondary education, I quickly became District Chairman and Propagandist for the Communist Youth Organization. A year later I was on its Regional Committee and was a commissar of the local militia. I was an enthusiastic supporter of Marxism-Leninism, regularly attended Party lectures, and studied hard *to* master the theory and doctrine. Soon I was ready and eager to pass on my knowledge and convert others.

My principal task, *from* the end of 1946, was to indoctrinate the local farmers and gain their support for the Party, and to discredit the bourgeois opposition. At that time, before the 1948 coup, the Party, with Soviet co-operation, was trying hard to win popular support. For example, when we had a drought and food shortage in 1947, Stalin sent us wheat. But farmers are by nature conservative, and they tended to receive our promises of Utopia with a good deal of scepticism.

The first time I had to address a meeting of farmers myself, I was so petrified by their hostility that I found myself promising that the Party would grant most of their demands. Quite by chance, and not through the efforts of the Party, many of those demands, such as the abolition of ration books, were realized soon afterwards, with the result that I gained the undeserved reputation of someone who could get things done. Naturally, I also made enemies, some of them dangerous. On one occasion at a meeting a farmer tried to shoot me, but luckily his neighbours overpowered and disarmed him while he was still aiming his pistol.

I had a narrower and more frightening escape one night after a meeting when I was riding home on the motorbike that the Party had given me for my duties. I was speeding through the forest, crouched well down over the handlebars, when I felt something brush through my hair. Going back to investigate, 1 found it was a wire stretched across the road between two trees; if I had been sitting up in the saddle it would have taken my head off.

One of my tasks in 1947 was to disrupt the meetings of other parties in the National Coalition. We would pack the hall with our own supporters and as soon as the speaker opened his mouth we would shout him down and pelt him with eggs and tomatoes, finally provoking a riot. After the Soviet-inspired Communist coup of February 1948 all rival party meetings were banned.

Soon after the coup the Party sent me to a meeting in a village where the inhabitants were Czechs who had been Soviet citizens before 1945. They knew what Communism was like, and wanted no part of it. After the meeting, a group of them burst into the restaurant where I and some of my friends were eating, frogmarched us outside and threw all of us into the river. Luckily I was a good swimmer.

Collectivization began a year later and hostility from the farmers naturally increased; they knew by now that it would mean the loss of their land. They turned their anger against all of us who had been active in persuading them to join the Party and help it to power, and as one of the most zealous and aggressive Party members I was often at the receiving end. Once, when I went with a girlfriend to a dance hall, a small group of farmers seized me and beat me up - all of them were Communists. I saw some of my attackers at a Party meeting next day, but I did not report them to the police. Instead, I tried to ridicule them as men who were incapable of reasoning with their opponents.

The worst occasion was at a village near the German border, where an enraged crowd surrounded me. If someone had not called the police I would have been killed; several of my colleagues were beaten to death. I should add that I personally felt no sense of shame over my role in the deception of the farmers; I was honestly convinced that it was in their best long-term interests.

Immediately after the 1948 coup the Party began to purge the country of the bourgeoisie. Many prominent industrialists, rich farmers, political leaders, and suspect officers in the police and Army were arrested or dismissed. I was too junior to take part in these round-ups, but three years later when I had become, at the age of twenty-one, the District Party Committee's Secretary for Agriculture, there was another wave of arrests of 'bourgeois elements' — in this case non-Communists who enjoyed more influence at local level than Party representatives. My committee had to prepare lists of such people; they were arrested and held for three or four years without trial in a prison camp, and their property was confiscated.

I acted without a twinge of conscience, for I was a convinced Communist and regarded these unfortunates as enemies of the revolution. People may understand my attitude if they remember that I was born in extreme poverty, and that despite my Social Democratic parents, I had always admired my uncle and other relatives who had been Communists before the war and many of whom had died in Nazi hands. And as I have said, I also attributed our escape from poverty to the influence of the Communist Party, the Party which was now offering me a chance to play a leading part in the community's affairs. As I studied Marxism-Leninism, it seemed to provide me with the chance of a new life and a new purpose in that life. And so the Party's cause became my cause, its enemies mine. But I like to think I never wholly lost my humanity, and at least I can say that on my way up the Party ladder I trod on no bodies.

In 1949 my father was appointed Chairman of the village collective, not that he was a particularly good farmer or a dedicated Party member, but he was well liked and trusted in the community. However, he was too outspoken for his own good, and managed to quarrel with both the First Secretary of the District Committee and the local representative of the StB (Security Police). I once overheard them discussing my father. The StB officer was proposing to arrest him as a 'saboteur'. Luckily for us, the policeman

got as drunk as a pig the same night and killed himself on his motorbike. Soon afterwards the First Secretary fell victim to some Party intrigue and was dismissed.

In the autumn of 1950 I was drafted for military service and posted to the 11th Engineering Battalion at Plzen (better known to beer drinkers as Pilsen). On 20 October my mother shaved my head - we did not want to leave the task to an Army barber - and my father drove me to the station on the tractor to begin my life as a soldier. Because of my Party background, the Battalion Commissar appointed me company propagandist; he was later to come under my command.

A week after I joined the Army, General Ludvik Svoboda was replaced as Minister of Defence by President Klement Gottwald's son-in-law, Alexei Cepicka. General Svoboda was not then the great national figure he became - at least to Western observers - in and after 1968, but he enjoyed the prestige of having commanded the Czech Corps fighting with the Red Army in 1941-5. What was not generally known was that he was also a Communist Party member. As Benes' Minister of Defence in 1948, Svoboda had rendered a valuable service to the Party by ordering the armed forces not to intervene against the coup, thus in effect handing the country over to the Communists. The reason for his dismissal now was that the Soviet Government had decided to reorganize our Army on exactly the same lines as the Red Army, and for this purpose they found it expedient to install in Svoboda's post the rabid Stalinist Cepicka. Within a very short time, the Czech Army trebled its numbers, we standardized our equipment, training, and military law with that of the Red Army, and adopted the commissar system down to company level.

After my six weeks' basic training, I was sent to the school for N.C.O.'s. The Party was perpetually on the lookout for 'promising' young men, and because of my Party record and the sudden expansion in the numbers of commissars, I soon found myself at the 'First School for Political Commissars' at Velvety, about sixty-live kilometres from Prague. Life in this school was tough; we worked from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day, spending 60 per cent of our time at Marxist-Leninist studies and 40 per cent on military training. In February 1951, half way through the six-month course, I had my first promotion, to Corporal.

This was a time of political upheaval, with the great purge trials of

the old Party leaders, most of them Jews, culminating in the conviction for Titoism and execution in 1950 of Rudolph Slansky, Secretary-General of the Czechoslovak Party. Slansky had himself begun the bloodletting in 1948 and continued it in 1950. Then the victims were 'bourgeois elements' and 'class enemies'; now the process caught up with him. I was to discover later that in these latest purges 2,000 Czechs and Slovaks lost their lives, and about 300,000 were imprisoned.

Nobody could feel safe. Some of the staff vanished from the Commissars School, and a grim pall of fear hung over us all. To keep the cadres on their toes and involve us all in the collective purge, the leadership tried to show that hostile elements were everywhere in the Party. We had a week-long open meeting at the school, chaired by an official of the political department of the Defence Ministry, to smell out Party enemies; it ended, to our satisfaction, in the dismissal of our very unpopular Commandant.

I managed to graduate, unpurged, in May 1951 with the rank of Sub-Lieutenant, and became Political Commissar and Deputy Commander of the 63rd Regiment of Engineers at Terezin. In September 1952 I was appointed Political Commissar and Deputy Commander of the 51st Engineering Brigade in the small town of Litomerice, about 50 kilometres north of Prague. The promotion exposed me for the first time to Soviet military advisers when a colonel was posted to our brigade. He was easy enough to work with, once he had adjusted to Czech conditions. When I showed him round his new villa he asked me hesitantly, 'Which of these fine rooms is for me and my family?' It took quite a time to convince him that he was to have the whole villa.

Just before the 10th Party Congress in the summer of 1953, the District First Secretary told me he had received orders from the Central Committee that I was to be elected to the District Conference of the Party. This meant, he explained, that I would automatically be nominated to the Regional Party Conference, where I would be chosen as a delegate to the 10th Party Congress. 'Furthermore,' he went on, 'you are now assured of a seat on the Party Central Committee.' This was the highest level in the Party hierarchy, and I was still naive enough to expect my election to be contested. But I was 'elected unanimously' the following year.

Meanwhile, in 1953, I was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel and

transferred to the post of Commissar of the Corps of Engineers. In the spring of 1954, the First Secretary of the Party himself telephoned me to say that I was going to be 'elected' as Member of Parliament for North Bohemia, representing the Litomerice district. When I complained to General Zeman, my superior in Prague, that I did not want to stay four years in Litomerice, he laughed. 'I am to be elected Member of Parliament for Slovakia, but I haven't the slightest intention of moving there.'

And so, at the age of twenty-seven, I found myself a Colonel, a Commissar, an M.P., and a member of the Central Committee of the Czech Communist Party.

Since I have been living in the West I have often been asked how it was that I achieved such rapid advancement — I became a General when I was forty. But there was nothing unusual about my career. Some of my fellow students at the Commissars School were even more successful. My friend General Prchlik, for example, became a Major-General at thirty-two. It was always Party policy to encourage - I would now say exploit - the young, and to thrust power upon them at an early age. When I went back to the Army after finishing at the Commissars School, I was astonished at the extent of our power. Not all stayed the course. Out of my 500 fellow students only about 100 retained their power. The rest did not know how to use their positions except for personal pleasure — the best food and drink, girls, fast cars - and so soon lost them. But others, like myself, were fanatical Communists and dedicated workers. It has been alleged that I owed my success to my friendship with the President's son, Antonin Novotny, which dated from when we were junior Commissars together in the Army, but this is quite untrue; it was sheer hard work.

When you have power at too young an age, you tend to ignore questions of right and wrong, especially if you are blinkered by a sense of dedication, as I was. By the time you get round to wondering whether what you are doing is wrong, it is too late; you are already enmeshed in the Party mahine, a part of the system. You have only two choices: either to go on as before; or to speak your mind, be expelled from the Party, and finished for life. In the latter event not only would you yourself be finished, but so would your family - your wife, children, and parents would fall victim to a cruel persecution. Such is the skill with which the Communist Party exploits the young.

2

Khrushchev and De-Stalinization

With the death in 1953 of Joseph Stalin and the execution shortly afterwards of the Secret Police chief, Lavrenti Beria, there came an end to the great purges and the bloodiest period in Russian history since Ivan the Terrible. In the satellite countries of Eastern Europe, as well as in the Soviet Union, people wondered uneasily how they were going to fare under the tyrant's successors.

These turned out to be, at first, a triumvirate of Georgiy Malenkov, Nikolai Bulganin, and Nikita Khrushchev, supported by Viacheslav Molotov and Lazar Kaganovich, with Malenkov apparently in the leading role. It was nearly two years before Khrushchev achieved his dominant position in the leadership. In the meantime, I had my first meeting with him when he led the Soviet delegation attending the 10th Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in June 1954, which I attended as a delegate from North Bohemia. Among the Russians was Madame Furtseva, First Secretary of the Moscow Party District Committee and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (C.P.S.U.). She was one of Khrushchev's closest supporters since their early days together in the Moscow Party bureaucracy, when they had been lovers.

Our Party Congress was held in Prague, in the Hall of the Fucik Park for Culture and Recreation, named after the Communist hero Julius Fucik, who was executed by the Gestapo during the war for being a member of the Party's Central Committee. It was the first Congress to be held since the death of our Stalinist President,

Klement Gottwald, and its purpose was to emphasize the continuity of his policies. Delegations from the other East European countries and from the Western Communist Parties - though not the Yugoslavs - were present to hear speaker after speaker drone through Marxist-Leninist dogma, declaim against Western Imperialism, and urge unceasing vigilance over the ubiquitous saboteurs, spies, and Party enemies. There was scarcely a mention of the urgent economic and social problems facing our country.

I was seated a short distance from the podium, where I could closely observe the Czech and foreign Party leadership. I noticed Khrushchev particularly because he seemed quite different from the typical Soviet bureaucrat. He was wearing the usual ill-fitting jacket, baggy trousers, and badly-made shoes of the Party apparatchik - probably a hangover from Stalin's time, when it was considered bourgeois, and so could be dangerous, to dress well. But he exuded personality and vigour, and made frequent jokes to our First Party Secretary, Antonin Novotny, which caused even that austere figure to laugh. In fact, he looked the archetypal *muzhik.*

He was obviously uncomfortable with the Stalinist line of the Congress, and fidgeted uneasily as each speaker bleated out hallowed platitudes; Khrushchev scarcely applauded any of them. His own speech, the text of which had already been distributed to us, had received clearance from the Soviet Politburo and gave no clue to his own thoughts, although it mentioned Stalin's name less frequently than most of the other speeches. He addressed us in Russian, which of course we all understood; it was compulsory teaching in all our schools and every senior Party member had to speak it.

On the third afternoon the Congress suddenly came to life. First Secretary Novotny stepped forward to tell us that Khrushchev had asked permission to make a private speech. We were electrified. Nobody had ever given a private speech before, and the idea of a Russian of Khrushchev's standing actually asking our permission to do anything was unprecedented. However, the hall was cleared, and we went into private session.

It was plain that Khrushchev had not prepared a draft. He spoke from a sheaf of notes, to which he referred only occasionally.

'Comrades and fellow delegates,' he began in a loud, decisive voice, 'I am disappointed in this Congress. In the tone and content of

the speeches up to now I find a wholly negative quality. I find them devoid of serious content and lacking in any sense of reality, especially in their attitude towards the Capitalist countries.'

Having dropped this bombshell he went on to let fall another. 'We must change our relationships with the West. The Socialist camp must have the chance of benefiting from the technical and industrial progress of Capitalism. This is an essential step towards the achievement of Socialism. Do not be blinded by ideology.

'Socialist ideas,' he added in a passage I have never forgotten, 'can only triumph when the peoples of Eastern Europe eat like the delegates at this Congress. Love of Communism passes through the stomach.'

He urged all the Communist countries to mobilize their technical and scientific cadres. 'Never mind whether or not they're good Marxists!' he shouted. 'We must give science a free hand to absorb as much as possible from the West. Any of you who despises or damns Capitalist engineering as a "bourgeois invention" is an idiot. It doesn't matter where the machine was made, only how it is used. For the last three days you've been claiming that Communist technology is the best. Well, you've been lying; Western technology is superior in most respects, and it's our duty as Communists to exploit it. For example, the Americans have the best combine harvesters in the world. Right, then let's buy them, and if they're coloured green we'll paint them red and make them work for Communism.'

All this was like a gust of fresh air after the turgid nonsense we had heard from the other delegates. Finally, in a welcome reference to our own economic problems, he concluded: 'Workers and management must both be given more responsibility; only in this way can you encourage productivity. You simply must improve living standards! Everyone must have a stake in growth improvement. It is the duty of the Party to understand this new idea, and to promote it. You must open the door to let in fresh winds, and you must see that they blow first of all through the Party.'

The speech was frequently interrupted by applause, and we gave Khrushchev a standing ovation at the end. But not everyone there was happy. Those of us who were involved in agricultural and industrial production were enthusiastic, but the old bureaucrats sensed in the speech a threat to their own position. Reaction upon the podium was restrained, but Novotny, after hedging his bets a little, came

round in support. The Soviet delegation warmly applauded Khrushchev, but he had probably picked the members himself.

After this refreshing interlude the Congress dragged on to its close, with the delegates' speeches, prepared and approved beforehand, echoing the orthodoxy of the early addresses.

I was naturally anxious to meet this unusual Party leader, and joined a group that had gathered round him during a coffee break. Someone led me forward and introduced me. Khrushchev inspected me carefully, obviously amused at my youth - I was just over five feet tall, weighed a little over seven stone, looked much younger than my twenty-seven years, and I was about to become the youngest member of the Central Committee in the forthcoming elections. 'Good day to you, Young Pioneer.' He beamed cordially and gripped my hand. Thereafter, whenever we met he addressed me as 'Young Pioneer' — the name given to the youngest section of the Komsomols, or Communist Youth.

The Congress ended with a reception given in the Hradcany Castle by our President Zaputocky for the foreign delegations and the Party Central Committee, to which I was invited. The Soviet delegation, our own Politburo, and a few prominent members of our Central Committee soon retired to a private room. I stayed behind with the others, talking to Novotny's son, Antonin. He had a great deal of charm, and devoted his entire life and considerable energies to having a good time, often to the confusion, embarrassment, and scandal of his ascetic father. Now, while we were drinking together, one of his father's bodyguards came up with a message to Antonin to join the group inside. But Antonin was enjoying the party here. He smiled pleasantly at the guard. 'Go jump in the river, my dear Comrade,' he drawled. The man shambled off, only to return briskly a few minutes later with a peremptory summons from the First Secretary.

'All right,' sighed Antonin. He linked his arm in mine. 'Come along, Jan, we'll both go. It might be fun to hear Khrushchev talking.'

Khrushchev was in lively form, dominating the conversation among the thirty or so people in the small room, and in particular deriving great amusement from teasing our Minister of Health about his frequent 'consultations' with his opposite number in Moscow, a lady with whom he was widely known to be having an affair.

Khrushchev soon turned to the theme of his private speech.

'If we want our movement to end its stagnation,' he said, 'we have no alternative to "peaceful co-existence". This is the only route forward for Communism. But we need more than speeches to alter the old policy; we must show we mean to change our ways, and the only way to convince the West of this is to lay responsibility for our past errors on the highest level.' He did not have to name Stalin, we all got the message.

'It is plain stupid,' he went on, 'to suppose that people don't know about our past mistakes."

There was an interruption here when the Czech composer, Dobias, a member of the Central Committee, suddenly decided to join in. As he lurched to his feet, it was only too apparent that he was drunk. Scarcely coherent, he started to congratulate the great man on introducing an era of world peace. Khrushchev, never the most patient of people, turned on him abruptly and ordered him to be quiet.

'By peaceful co-existence,' he snarled, 'I do *not* mean pacifism. I mean a policy that will destroy Imperialism and make the Soviet Union and her allies the strongest economic and military power in the world.

'It is essential to understand,' he concluded in two memorable and ominous sentences, 'that this new diplomacy will be successful only as long as there is a Soviet Marshal behind every diplomat. Peaceful co-existence is not "class peace"; there can never be world peace while one Imperialist lives.'

Later Khrushchev returned to his reflections on the past. 'We arrested a whole generation of scientists, technicians, managers, and good Party activists for no other reason than that the K.G.B. denounced them as traitors. This is unpardonable. As good Communists we must not be afraid to go to the prisons and release these people, apologize to them for the past, and bring them back into our movement. We need such people.'

This was too much for the Secretary of our Central Committee, Bruno Koller, a committed Stalinist. He interjected: 'Surely it will be enough just to let them go free? We don't have to apologize to them as well.'

Koller, a German by birth, had played a leading role, under the Russians, in the Czech purges. He had sat on the committee which

interrogated the victims and handed out sentences. He enjoyed the full trust and protection of the K.G.B., whose willing servant he was, and he continued to wield great influence even after de-Stalinization.

His interruption angered Khrushchev.

'Nobody will trust Communists,' he said, 'if that's all we do. The Party has to do a lot of apologizing to the people for the past.'

He wound up by warning us that we would have to replace those Party cadres who were compromised by their past, or who could not face up to change. As he raised his glass to toast the Central Committee of the Czech Party, I noticed some worried faces among the members. Bruno Koller muttered angrily: 'If Khrushchev believes he can touch Stalin's memory, he is quite wrong.'

But Khrushchev had already done just that, and in my hearing, before the formal opening of the Congress. I had arrived early at the Conference Hall and was sitting with my earphones on, listening to Khrushchev and Novotny talking informally on the podium. I heard Khrushchev ask Novotny, 'Where is General Svoboda?'

Svoboda, who had been purged in 1950 and replaced as Defence Minister by the Stalinist Alexei Cepicka, was at that time working as a bookkeeper on a collective. An embarrassed silence followed Khrushchev's question. Then Novotny explained how Svoboda had been dismissed from the leadership on Stalin's orders because he inclined too much to the West. Cepicka, seated on the other side of Khrushchev, added, 'Svoboda was also a Western spy.'

I saw Khrushchev turn on him with a look of fury. 'What *were you* doing during the war? Working for Hitler, no doubt.'

In fact, Cepicka had taken no part at all in the war. Khrushchev went on: 'General Svoboda fought for his country, rifle in hand, against the Fascists! What more is needed to prove his patriotism?'

The next day Svoboda, hastily summoned from his collective, appeared at the Congress as an official guest of the Party, to be kissed on both cheeks by Khrushchev in front of us all. Soon afterwards he was appointed Commander of the Prague Military College, and in November became a Parliamentary Deputy and a member of the Presidium.

I have already mentioned the debt the Party owed Svoboda for his part in the coup of February 1948. But he had also struck up a close personal friendship with Khrushchev during the war. Svoboda commanded the Czech Corps, which served with the Red Army on

the Ukrainian front under Marshal Ivan Konev, to whom Khrushchev was then Chief Commissar. In fact, Svoboda was not a very competent soldier, and was for a while relieved of his command because of the heavy losses his leadership caused the Corps; but Khrushchev's affection for him survived.

Over the years, until his fall in 1964, I used to see Khrushchev frequently, sometimes when I made a visit to Moscow, and always when he came to Prague. It would be exaggerating to say we became close friends; nevertheless, looking back, I can say that I really adored Khrushchev. He was quite different from other Soviet leaders. He had none of their bureaucratic mentality and was very flexible. Bt he was certainly not, as some of his enemies alleged, a lukewarm Communist. On the contrary, he was very dedicated to the cause. He believed that if he could bring a better life to the people of the U.S.S.R. with a thriving economy and with strong, but wholly modern, armaments and military forces, he could achieve world Communism faster and more effectively than with Stalin's methods.

To me, his most attractive features were his refreshing informality and his unorthodox approach to people and problems. I was often surprised by his forthright attitude towards officialdom. I heard him speak his mind in no uncertain terms to other Politburo members, senior K.G.B. officials, and even the all-powerful Soviet Marshals, not to mention the heads of our own Government. And he respected similar treatment from others. That such a man could have survived the rule of Stalin indicates his remarkable self-control and skill at dissembling. However, for all his cunning he was curiously naive about people, a defect which contributed to his eventual undoing.

Although he looked like a peasant he was surprisingly well educated - and self-educated at that. He had read a great deal and was very well versed in the great Russian classical writers like Tolstoy and Chekhov, whom he frequently quoted from memory. He was not ashamed to involve the name of God in his public speeches, although he knew it shocked the orthodox. The freshness of his outlook, his easy, informal manner in public, and his earthy wit appealed to the Soviet people and he was probably amongst the best loved Soviet leaders. He hated the Party apparatus and the K.G.B., and treated their opinions - and sometimes those of the Marshals - with scant respect. By alienating simultaneously those three pillars of the Soviet state he brought about his own ruin.

In February 1956, two years after his talk with us in the private rooms of the Hradcany Castle, Khrushchev made his famous secret speech before the 20th Soviet Party Congress, in which he exposed the evils of the Stalin era. His de-Stalinization policy had two purposes: one, as he had indicated to us in Prague, was the more efficient promotion of Communism; the other was to use it as a means of eliminating his rivals and consolidating his own power in the Party. He knew that the N.K.V.D. (which later became the K.G.B.) was universally detested as an instrument of Stalinist terror, and he used de-Stalinization to gain control of the machinery of state security, as well as to discredit his rivals with accusations of Stalinism. The opposition, labelled the 'anti-Party group', was purged within eighteen months of the 20th Congress, and Khrushchev emerged as undisputed leader, with the power and independence of the K.G.B. severely limited. For this success Khrushchev depended on, and managed to obtain, the support of the Army.

His secret speech was circulated within the Czechoslovak Party and immediately sparked off strong criticism amongst us against our own Stalinists. The focus of this antagonism was the hated figure of Alexei Cepicka, currently Minister of Defence and formerly, at the time of the purges, also Minister ofjustice. Cepicka was surely one of the most evil figures ever to achieve power in any totalitarian regime. He owed his position partly to his marriage with the late President Gottwald's daughter, and partly to a rigid obedience and fawning subservience to Stalin and our Soviet 'advisers' in the country, mainly military and N.K.V.D. At first he acted as courier between Gottwald and Stalin, and was often present at meetings at the Soviet Politburo to transmit to his father-in-law their decisions about purges in Czechoslovakia; as Minister ofjustice he carried them out. In fact, he did the dirtiest job of all in that period. As Defence Minister he was totally under the influence of the chief Soviet adviser at the time, General Gusev, the most uncompromising Stalinist of all the Soviet generals I met.

In the Army, Cepicka established not discipline, but terror. He saw the slightest mistake or failure as deliberate sabotage, and would have the offender imprisoned, and sometimes shot, as an 'Imperialist agent'. He imposed and rigidly enforced the Soviet military code of justice, although he knew our Army was totally unaccustomed and unsuited to it.

His private life was the most luxurious of all our Communist leaders, his megalomania the most grotesque. As Minister of Defence he surrounded himself with trappings of pomp that even Stalin might have found absurd. For example, whenever he went to inspect troops or watch manoeuvres, he was accompanied in his car by two colonels, whose task it was, whenever they halted, to jump out carrying an enormous red carpet and lay it out for Cepicka to walk on. The set expressions on the soldiers' faces as they marched past during parades unnerved Cepicka, and he ordered all commanding officers to ensure that their troops were smiling as they passed him. With the effort of trying to keep their rifles imposition and smile at the same time, they looked as if they had stomach-aches.

He was equally ludicrous in his off-duty activities — in the less vicious of them, anyway. He enjoyed walking in the forest, either hunting game or picking mushrooms. On such occasions, two colonels again had to escort him, carrying a comfortable chair. Whenever he paused in his walk it was their duty to place the chair in a suitable position so that he could sit down and rest. He had a huge personal fortune, worth millions of dollars, for which he never accounted, and which he spent on magnificent luxuries - villas, cars, jewellery - for himself and his friends. His wife, for example, owned seventeen mink coats. Nobody else in the Politburo lived in such state. Moreover, he had stolen large amounts of Government funds. In 1952 there was talk of an investigation. Cepicka panicked and tried to flush thousands of crowns down the lavatory; he was so incompetent that he blocked all the drains and a plumber had to clear them.

On his travels around the country he was accompanied by a party of uniformed whores - 'social workers' was their designation - to satisfy his very considerable appetites. There was a darker, criminal side to this undignified indulgence, which could only have survived in a regime such as ours. He would pursue any attractive girl he met, and if she refused to go to his bed he would threaten her with gaol, a threat the unfortunate girls knew he would carry out without scruple. As Minister of Justice he could, and often did, send people to prison at his own discretion and keep them there without trial.

When I moved to the Ministry of Defence, I had an assistant whose fiancee was unlucky enough to attract Cepicka's attention. Given the choice of going to prison or betraying her lover, she

jumped from an upper window and killed herself. The Party, of course, hushed up the incident.

On Gottwald's death, Cepicka had tried to succeed him as First Secretary, while still retaining the Ministry of Defence. But the rest of the Politburo hated him nearly as much as did the Army, and so they elected Novotny. Now, in the aftermath of Khrushchev's secret speech, Cepicka's position came under attack, and I fired the opening shot in a speech at a meeting of the Central Committee in March 1956. Novotny, sensing the unrest in the Party, had declared that anyone might speak at this meeting, but it was clear from his own address that neither he nor the rest of the leadership intended to promote de-Stalinization; they hoped merely to paper over the cracks. Those of us who had been elected in 1954 were disgusted, and I knew from our earlier meeting in Hradcany Castle that Khrushchev would not let them get away with it. Although I had never before made a major speech to the Central Committee, this seemed the moment, my friends and I agreed, to make my first contribution.

When I had been given leave to speak I rose to my feet and, although my knees felt shaky, launched my attack.

Why is it, Comrades,' I began, 'that the Party seems unable to face the truth? Why don't we admit that a personality cult docs exist even in our own Party? Its most notorious exponent is . . . ' I paused for effect, 'the Minister of Defence, Alexei Cepicka.'

Total silence descended on the Central Committee. Cepicka turned white, and the Politburo members glanced uneasily at each other in mute enquiry. Who, they were wondering, is behind this attack? They could not believe that someone as unimportant as I would dare to make it without backing from the leadership, nor would I have done if I had not been so naive. From their frightened faces it was clear they thought I had been selected to initiate a purge of the major Stalinists, and they feared for their own positions.

I warmed to my attack. Although I did not mention Cepicka's whoring and intimidation of women, or his financial scandals, I listed all the other examples of his megalomania. When I sat down no one applauded. As the silence continued it began to look as though I had placed my own head, not Cepicka's, on the block. Even my friends seemed to have lost their nerve.

Then, just as I was giving up hope, another Central Committee

member, an Air Force colonel, got up to endorse my accusations, and added further examples of Cepicka's corruption. No one followed us, but we had won a partial victory, because Novotny adjourned the meeting and called for another one in a week's time.

A couple of days later, Cepicka invited me to the Politburo swimming pool 'to talk things over'. It was situated in a large building in a suburb of Prague, and also contained a massage parlour, a sauna, and a splendid restaurant - all for Politburo members only. I knew Cepicka also kept girls on the premises, but they were not in evidence. He gave me a superb lunch, with champagne and brandy, while he tried to persuade me to retract my public accusations. In particular, he tried to justify his subservience to the Soviet system, saying that Soviet experiences were applicable to us all.

I knew all along that a reconciliation was impossible. Moreover, it had now become a contest between us for survival; if I had backed down, it would have meant my destruction. My ally, the Air Force colonel, was just as adamant.

When the Central Committee reconvened, our attack was reinforced by none other than our Prime Minister, Viliam Siroky, who accused Cepicka of having threatened members of the Presidium with charges of sabotage. Zdenek Fierlinger, former Social Democrat leader and ex-Ambassador to Moscow, also spoke out against the Minister of Defence:

'Comrade Cepicka,' he told us in censorious tones, 'is the spiritual father of the most brutal code of military justice in the world.'

Nobody mentioned Cepicka's black record as Minister of Justice, but he was forced to resign and the Central Committee appointed him to the powerless post of Chief of the Patents Office.

The Party was in no hurry to carry out further de-Stalinization or enquire too closely into the purges. Cepicka was a useful scapegoat. My denunciation enabled them to throw him to the wolves, and so escape the need to sacrifice more of the higher Party cadres. Under pressure from Khrushchev, Novotny eventually set up a 'Committee of Enquiry' to examine the purge cases, but it moved extremely slowly. In spite of further pressure from Khrushchev in 1963, full rehabilitation of most of the victims did not occur until Dubcek came to power in 1968. As a reward for my speech, which had turned out so convenient for the Party, I was appointed Chief of Staff to Cepicka's successor, General Bohumir Lomsky.

The Party, however, had a hard time tor a while in their efforts to avoid de-Stalinization. About a quarter of the local organizations throughout the country, especially those representing the intelligentsia and the armed forces, submitted resolutions demanding a special Congress to debate the conclusions of the Soviet Party's 20th Congress. They considered the main obstacle to change was the composition of our Central Committee, and their object in calling for a Congress was to change the membership. The Party eventually managed, by a combination of intimidation and cunning political manoeuvring, to frustrate this move with a whitewashing conference. Not one official was named as a Stalinist.

Before taking up my new appointment at the Ministry of Defence in May 1956, I had an interview with Novotny.

'I know you're a politician rather than a soldier,' he told me, 'but don't worry about your new posting. We all agree that General Lomsky is a good commander, but he's certainly no politician. Your job will be to ensure that his decisions and recommendations are in line with Party policy. After all, Lomsky is not even a member of the Central Committee, as you arc, and so you'll be in a strong position.'

Bohumir Lomsky had a first-class reputation as a soldier. He had been Svoboda's Chief of Staff on the Eastern front, and it was commonly believed that only his able generalship had saved the Czech Corps from the worst consequences of Svoboda's blunders; for a time, in fact, Lomsky had taken over command of the Corps. He was very popular in the Army, and he was by no means as naive as Novotny had implied.

I found him an easy and pleasant master, but my new job carried enormous responsibilities. All recommendations from Lomsky to the Politburo, the Soviet General Staff, and the Military Committee of the Central Committee passed through my hands. I had to examine them in the light of Soviet directives and Party guidelines. Conversely, I had to scrutinize all instructions passing from the Party and the Soviet authorities to the Minister, and to advise him on how to implement them.

I headed five departments, of which the so-called 'Special Department' was the most secret. It controlled all correspondence between the Minister, the Red Army and the highest Party echelons, as well as all strategic plans. The other departments under me dealt with legislative and legal matters, aspects of military discipline, enter-

taining and hospitality - such as the provision of villas for visiting Soviet Marshals and other distinguished guests - and the communication of the Minister's orders to the Army. I had two special assistants: one wrote Lomsky's speeches, the other acted as his A.D.C. in the field.

Perhaps my most important duty was to serve as recorder and assistant to the Minister in his nominal capacity as Secretary of the Military Committee of the Central Committee. I was, in fact, the working secretary, and prepared all papers for the Committee, transmitted its decisions to the appropriate Ministries and collated their responses for Novotny. The Military Committee was the highest policy-making body in the Party on military and intelligence matters, and my Special Department held its archives.

I spent an uncomfortable five days taking over from my predecessor, a tough Stalinist general and former political commissar. Within hours of his departure, one of my staff asked me if I had seen the secret safes. I had noticed one safe in an alcove, to which my predecessor denied having the combination - only Cepicka knew it, he told me. Now my staffshowed me thirteen more, which I had not seen and which, they told me, contained very secret material. With Lomsky's approval, I had them all opened by a safe-breaker from military intelligence.

What I found in those safes appalled me. They contained a comprehensive record of Cepicka's involvement in the purges as Minister of Justice and Chairman of the State Committee for Religion. There were hundreds of letters from the condemned cells, pleading innocence and asking for the death sentence to be commuted. Each one carried the single word 'execute', initialled by Cepicka. There were also reports from the Secret Police on the execution of priests and Catholics, and lists of victims, prepared by the Secret Police and approved by the Politburo, which ran to several hundred names. No details were given of the charges against any of them or their origin, only the heading, 'List of Enemies of the Party who are to be Isolated'.

Cod alone knows how many murders and false imprisonments those papers recorded. I immediately took a selection to General Lomsky. He was too frightened to involve himself in the matter.

I don't even want to know about those papers,' he told me. 'If you want to take action, you'd better go to the First Secretary.'

Novotny was not in the least surprised by what I showed him. But he firmly rejected my suggestion that he should arrest Cepicka and bring him to trial.

'We already have enough trouble explaining the past,' he said, 'after that 20th Congress of the Soviet Party. If I have Cepicka put on trial, the process won't stop there; people will blame the Party and start asking who else was responsible. Go back to your office now, and just forget what you've seen.'

Thus he sowed in me the first seeds ofdisillusion with the Communist system.

I was back in my office within twenty minutes. But the K.G.B., together with officers of the Czech military counter-intelligence, were already there with a senior member of the Central Committee. He informed me that Novotny had authorized the removal of the documents. He took them all away, and Novotny never referred to them again. But many years later the Party officially admitted that 1,600 Czechs had been executed in the purge trials. This is certainly an understatement, even taking into account that this figure did not include the large number who were murdered without trial, or the bourgeois leaders who were liquidated in, and just after, the Communist coup of 1948.

3

Trouble With the Satellites

If the effects of Khrushchev's secret speech were unsettling in Czechoslovakia, they were near catastrophic in some of the other satellites, notably Poland and Hungary. Poland was the first to boil over. In June 1956 there was an industrial strike in Poznan against low salaries, poor living standards, and bad factory management. The Polish Government unwisely used troops to suppress it, thus inspiring a wave of sympathy throughout the country for the strikers. The Polish Politburo soon lost control of the situation, and the initiative passed to the strikers.

The issue broadened into a general and vociferous attack on the centralized economy, the presence of the Red Army on Polish soil, and the crippling cost of the economic agreements imposed on the country by the Soviet Union. Local Party organizations submitted resolutions criticizing the leadership, and even demanding to know why Poland must have as her Defence Minister the Soviet Marshal Rokossovsky. Finally, of course, the Polish Central Committee and Politburo came in for the same widespread criticism as ours had received. They were accused of failing to carry out de-Stalinization and of conspiring with the Russians to cover up the past.

These developments occurred at a bad time for the Polish Party. The first Secretary, Edward Ochab, had been appointed only three months previously, on the death of his Stalinist predecessor. He had none of the latter's skill and resolution, and soon lost control of the Party apparatus. In desperation he asked for help from the old 'anti-Party group' who had been purged in the early 1950s, notably

Wladyslaw Gomulka, who had been under house arrest for some years, and Marian Spychalski, who was in gaol. These two men were invited to place before the Central Committee their proposals for resolving the crisis.

Because Gomulka was, in the atmosphere of those days, a very progressive and liberal Communist, the Soviet leaders took fright at the prospect of his advancement and the debate taking place within the Polish Party. The Soviets closed the Polish borders and ordered their troops in the country to converge on Warsaw. Khrushchev and Molotov flew there to attend the Central Committee meeting and support Ochab against the liberals. But Khrushchev had scarcely begun to speak when he was challenged from the audience. He demanded to know his critic's identity.

'Gomulka,' came the reply. 'First Secretary of the Polish Party.'

To his chagrin, Khrushchev had arrived too late. Gomulka had been elected to Ochab's place shortly before he landed. Khrushchev immediately invited the two of them to a conference, hoping to prevent the introduction of more liberals into the Politburo and other organs of Government. Gomulka dug his heels in.

'Poland,' he declared, 'is a Socialist country and will remain so. We are simply following your own example, and dealing with our Stalinists as you've dealt with yours. How our Party runs this country is our business. I know the Red Army is now converging on the capital, but I warn you, Comrade, unless you order them back to barracks you can tell your Politburo there will be civil war here in Poland. Moreover, the entire Polish people will be against the Soviet Union.'

A detailed report of this meeting passed through my hands in our Defence Ministry soon afterwards.

Khrushchev may have already suspected that he was in for a fight in Hungary and wished to avoid a similar confrontation with Poland. He overruled Molotov, who wanted to send in the Red Army, and decided to give Gomulka his head. He well knew, of course, that since Poland - unlike Hungary - had no frontier with the West, the Red Army was bound to be the final arbiter in any serious quarrel with the Soviet Union.

Gomulka remained under Soviet pressure, but at first he was able to go his own way. He reorganized the Party apparatus, replaced Rokossovsky with Spychalski as Minister of Defence and member of

the Politburo, and secured the withdrawal of all Soviet commanders from the Polish Army. He even continued for a while to whip up popular support with his anti-Soviet speeches. Within three years, however, he came to realize that Poland was too closely tied to the Soviet bloc to make possible any fundamental changes in the Party and system of government. As he himself came under increasing criticism for failing to implement the reforms he had promised, he became thoroughly disillusioned, reversed the trend towards liberalism in order to keep himself in power, and became an obedient Stalinist.

The Russians did their best to alienate him from his liberal supporters with various underhand manoeuvres, in one of which they involved the Czechs. They used the former Social Democrat, Zdenek Fierlinger, whom I have already mentioned in connection with Cepicka and who was a K.G.B. agent, to tell the Polish Prime Minister Jozef Cyrankiewicz - also a former Social Democrat - that the Polish Social Democrats were planning to overthrow Gomulka and take over the Party. Fierlinger produced a fictitious list of people involved in the plot - supplied, of course, by the K.G.B. Whether or not Gomulka was taken in, his drift towards the Soviet line was unmistakeable.

The Czech Party did everything possible to isolate our country from events in Poland, especially since they knew that many Party cadres and most of our intelligentsia were sympathetic to Gomulka's original reforms.

In October 1956, Soviet control of Eastern Europe suffered its most serious challenge since the end of the Second World War. Hungary, which had been in a state of turbulence for several months, exploded in a national revolt against Soviet domination. The cause of this rising lay in the savage nature of the regime under the dictator Matyas Rakosi, the most repressively Stalinist and slavishly pro-Soviet of all satellite regimes. The reaction of the Hungarian people to Khrushchev's secret speech and his liberalizing programme was correspondingly violent. All sections of the population were united in hatred of the Soviet overlords and their tools — Rakosi and his infamous A.V.H., or Security Police.

Yielding at first to popular pressure, the Kremlin engineered Rakosi's resignation in July, but he was succeeded by another Stalinist, and the pressure mounted as October approached. The

Hungarians organized their opposition more effectively than either the Poles or Czechs. Quite early on they formed 'Petofi Clubs' -named after one of their national revolutionary heroes - which became forums to debate the 20th Soviet Party Congress and even the validity of Marxism. Party discipline soon began to crumble, and the Central Committee was inundated with demands for fundamental changes in ideology, organization, and the economy. As the Party set its face against all of them, the debate moved into the streets with mass demonstrations.

On 23 October the dam burst. By 9 p.m. there were several hundred thousand demonstrators on the streets of Budapest. The A.V.H. opened fire on the crowd in front of the Radio Building, and the people went beserk, attacked them and seized their weapons. The Politburo ordered the Hungarian Army to disperse the riot, but the troops joined the demonstrators and even gave them arms. The Soviet garrison was forced to abandon Budapest for a while, after suffering casualties and losing armour. But the people's fury was directed particularly against the A.V.H., whose members were hunted down and shot. In a desperate effort to stem the revolt the Party appointed Imre Nagy as Prime Minister on 24 October. Unfortunately he committed the cardinal error of announcing Hungary's secession from the Warsaw Pact.

From the beginning the Soviet leaders had been watching the situation closely and preparing for armed intervention. On their instructions, Czechs had already infiltrated Hungarian-speaking StB officers and Party cadres into Hungary to try and rally the shattered Hungarian Party and A.V.H. In the military sphere, we alerted our troops on the Hungarian border in case of N.A.T.O. intervention, and mobilized our reserves. We also kept tight control over our Hungarian-speaking minority on the frontier. But I well remember that at no time was the Defence Ministry's senior Soviet adviser, General Boykov, ever in any doubt that his Government would crush the revolution.

The Red Army did not let him down. In the early hours of 4 November their tanks and infantry stormed back into Budapest and swept across the whole country, overpowering the gallant but hopeless resistance of the Hungarians. The K.G.B. abducted Nagy and subsequently shot him. Janos Kadar was established in power and became the instrument of Soviet control. A former victim of

Rakosi's purges, who had been horribly tortured by the A.V.H. and who had not long since emerged from prison, he was likely to receive sympathy from some Hungarians and Western observers. Earlier in the year he had collaborated with Nagy, but during the revolt he had joined the Russians and returned with them to Budapest.

A significant legacy of the Hungarian revolution was that thereafter the armies of the satellites were ordered to discontinue the oath to 'serve the People' that they had previously sworn; instead, they swore simply 'to serve Socialism'.

On 3 November, the day before the Red Army went into action in Hungary, Khrushchev spoke to all the Communist heads of state, in person or by telephone, asking them to support his military action. Naturally all the East European leaders endorsed it, but Mao Tse-tung - so Khrushchev told me four years afterwards - went much further: he warned Khrushchev that if the Soviet Army did not crush the revolution, 'the working class and the Communist movement will never forgive you'. Only later, after the Sino-Soviet split, did Khrushchev realize that Mao had been preparing the ground for Chinese accusations that the Soviet Union had hesitated to come to the aid of the Hungarian Party in the interests of peaceful coexistence with the West, and that if it had not been for Mao's intervention the revolution would have succeeded. This is in sharp contrast to the Chinese attitude twelve years later towards the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, which they roundly condemned.

Our own Stalinists, such as Bruno Koller, eagerly blamed the revolution on Khrushchev's liberalization policy, and used it to limit and control de-Stalinization in Czechoslovakia; they were enthusiastic supporters, of course, of the Red Army's intervention. The Soviet Politburo, however, conducted their own post-mortem on Hungary, and their conclusions were different. The official line of Communist propaganda had blamed the revolution on 'the intervention of the Imperialists', but the Politburo rejected this comforting explanation. Instead, they blamed the 'nihilism' of Soviet policy and the 'mistakes' of the Rakosi regime. They had been wrong, they decided, to suppose that Rakosi's slavish adherence to the Soviet model had made Hungary an effective Communist state. In their report they pointed out that because of Hungary's 'bourgeois roots' (and, they might have added, their long history of suffering) the Hungarian people still cherished the symbols of their

own nationality. The report criticized the K.G.B. for underestimating the strength of 'counter-revolutionary forces'. The Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party were also blamed for having accepted too readily the optimistic assessments of the Hungarian Party.

Khrushchev circulated this report to the Czech Politburo - also, I suppose, to those of the other satellites. For his own protection he was determined to see that all parts of the Soviet apparatus shared the odium.

The report brought significant concessions to our own national pride. We were permitted, for example, to play our National Anthem, and to fly our flag without the Soviet flag alongside. Much more significant, Khrushchev stated clearly in the report that the Eastern European leadership was experienced enough to handle its own affairs without the need for so many Soviet 'advisers'. Many of them were recalled — in the Army from divisional level downwards. Senior advisers in the Ministries and the General Staff remained; unfortunately those on the General Staff assumed a new title, 'Representatives of the Warsaw Pact', which gave them more direct authority than they had previously enjoyed. But at least there were not so many and they were not so visible to the people.

Younger officers and commissars in the Czech armed forces mistakenly thought that this report, following the 20th Party Congress, gave them licence to make the Czech Army a truly national force. Unlike the senior commanders, most of whom had served in the Czech Corps on the Eastern front, the political commissars had been recruited after 1948- their average age was thirty-four - and were inclined to liberal attitudes. They suggested democratic reforms, a change from the Soviet style of uniform, the reintroduction of old Czech Army customs, and the general de-Sovietization of the services. These suggestions went first to the Czech and then to the Soviet Politburo.

The latter responded by sending General Gusev, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Warsaw Pact, to Prague with a fifteen-man inspection team to root out the liberals from the Army. Gusev, as I have said, had been senior adviser to Cepicka in the Ministry of Defence, and was an uncompromising hard-liner. My Minister sent me to meet him at the airport, being himself tied up with a session of the Politburo. As Gusev descended from his aircraft I stepped forward

on the tarmac, hand outstretched in greeting.

'Welcome, Comrade General,' I began with my most ingratiating smile, 'My Minister, General Lomsky, asks me to convey his warmest respects and to apologize for not being here in person. He is involved with our Politburo.'

Gusev ignored my hand and glared at me.

'First,' he barked, 'you will stand to attention when speaking to me! Secondly, you will tell your Minister that when I come to Prague he will come and meet me. Thirdly, your cap is a disgrace and your turn-out sloppy.' He walked to his car.

His inspection embraced the whole of our senior military structure, from regimental command and the Main Political Administration to the Minister and Chief of Staff. Over 100 politcal commissars and commanders were dismissed.

Nevertheless, this was not the end of liberalism in the Czech Army. Six years later, after the 22nd Soviet Party Congress, which reaffirmed de-Stalinization, it blossomed again in a naive attempt to democratize the service and establish a form of collective leadership, and so undermine the power of our pro-Soviet commanders. It began, as attempts at liberalization always did, in the military Political Academy. The Soviet reaction was immediate; this time they sent us General Yepishev, Chief of the Main Political Administration of the Soviet Armed Forces and former deputy head of the K.G.B.

Yepishev was a sinister man; in fact, he was the most frightening Russian I have ever come across. He resembled a character from the pages of Dostoevsky — a shadowy conspirator. He would never look you in the eye; he always spoke very quickly, as though he knew from his K.G.B. experience that his office would be bugged; and he never smiled or laughed. We came to dread his inspections; they were always followed by widespread dismissals. Although nominally a diplomat in those days, he always looked and behaved like the deputy chief of the K.G.B. He was incapable of compromise; if you stepped even a fraction out of line you were finished. Not even my Minister, Lomsky, dared oppose him.

4

Soviet-U.S. Relations

As soon as Khrushchev had consolidated his hold on the Soviet satellite Parties, he tried to implement his policy of peaceful co-existence towards the West and called for a summit conference. The Soviet Party, which took the somewhat unrealistic view that the balance of power between East and West had tilted in its favour, believed that the West would be ready to make concessions. Khrushchev himself was confident that his de-Stalinization policy had won him considerable Western sympathy. He was quite unaware that his brutal suppression of the Hungarians had aroused disillusionment and bitterness in free Europe and America - although those countries had done nothing to stop Khrushchev. Their indignation was only a nine days' wonder, and soon vanished in the total self-absorption of the peoples of the West.

Although encouraged by the reaction of the American public to his offers of peaceful co-existence, Khrushchev came away from his meeting with Eisenhower at Camp David full of misgivings about the President. He felt Eisenhower had no grasp of foreign affairs and relied entirely on such hard-line advisers as Foster Dulles. However, he believed for a time that pressure of public opinion, tired of the Cold War, would force the British and U.S. Governments to make concessions at the summit talks in Paris. To exploit this situation, the Soviet Union began to court major industrial organizations in the West, pointing out the commercial advantages to them of peaceful co-existence. The award of the Lenin Peace Prize to the American millionaire Cyrus Eaton should be seen in this context.

As the summit approached, Khrushchev's doubts about Eisen-

hower and Dulles grew, reinforced by pressure from the Soviet Party and Army. He came to fear a cool reception for his new policy and a personal rebuff from Eisenhower at the conference, and he began to look for an excuse to postpone it. On 1 May 1960, Gary Powers and the U2 reconnaissance aircraft provided it.

The U2 flights were, of course, well known to the Warsaw Pact long before this incident. I first learned of them in the autumn of 1957 when I became Chief of Staff to the Minister of Defence. At that time the Russians could not stop the flights because the altitude at which the aircraft flew was out of range of their anti-aircraft missiles and fighters.

Khrushchev's announcement that the Red Army had shot down the U2 — he deliberately avoided mentioning the fate of the pilot — was greeted with American denials that they had engaged in spy flights. Khrushchev then reported that the pilot was in Soviet custody, and accused the Americans of lying. Eisenhower hammered the last nail into the coffin of the summit conference when he eventually admitted to the reconnaissance flights and boldly defended America's right to engage in them.

And so Khrushchev was able, under a cloak of righteous indignation, to cancel the conference, whose outcome he had come to dread, and blame the Americans. I discovered the extent of Soviet satisfaction two weeks later at a lunch attended by V.P. Tereschkin, Deputy Chief of the International Department of the Soviet Central Committee, and Marshal Moskalenko, commander of the missile forces of the Soviet Army. They divulged that before the U2 incident the Soviet Party had concluded that there was no alternative to attending the conference because they could not afford to alienate Western European opinion. But they had planned to wreck it by making proposals on disarmament which would be unacceptable to the Americans, and so place the blame for failure on U.S. intransigence. Moskalenko made it clear that the Red Army was totally opposed to peaceful co-existence, and added that the Army had not forgiven Khrushchev for his troop reductions - about three million men — over the last five years. The U2 incident, he said, demonstrated the need for Soviet military supremacy.

The Central Committee, however, chalked it up as a gain for the policy of peaceful co-existence because it had shown that lack of progress was due to the American Cold Warriors.

In the autumn of 1959 we received the first of several visits from Fidel Castro's brother, Raul. He arrived, self-invited, at the head of a delegation sent by Fidel to discuss the possibility of Czech military assistance to Cuba. The visit was therefore the responsibility of our Ministry of Defence, and I was put in charge of its organization. We had already discussed the Cuban request with the Russians, whose initial reaction was largely one of indifference - they regarded Fidel with some suspicion at this time. However, they were interested enough to order the Czechs - their usual stalking horses - to hold exploratory talks. They did not invite Raul to visit the U.S.S.R. - nor indeed had he asked to.

Raul was not an official guest of our Politburo, and so he was given a typical 'Third World' reception: there were no Ministers other than Lornsky to greet him at the airport. However, we managed to assemble a fair crowd there by ordering out all employees of our Ministry and marshalling groups of schoolchildren to shout slogans praising Czech-Cuban friendship, wave Czech and Cuban flags, and present the delegation with bouquets of carnations.

The aircraft taxied to a halt in front of us, the door opened, and beside me Lornsky stiffened as a ragged group resembling the chorus from *Carmen* sauntered down the steps and shambled across the tarmac to the spot where we were waiting with the guard of honour at attention. After some difficulty - all the delegates wore major's stars on their shoulders - we identified Raul Castro, a gaunt young man of twenty-eight with hollow cheeks, long black hair, and a thin black moustache that seemed to be glued to his lip. He presented an intriguing contrast to the immaculate Lornsky as the two of them inspected the guard of honour.

We accompanied the Cubans to the Government villa in Roosevelt Street where we were putting them up, and where we had arranged to have an informal dinner with them at six that evening after they had caught up on their sleep. There was an embarrassing moment when we discovered that there were fourteen Cubans but only twelve beds in the villa. But, with their guerrilla spirit, they were not in the least dismayed: Raul shared a bed with his aide, and two others doubled up. We discovered later that they all slept in the clean linen sheets with their boots on.

Raul and I took to each other from the start and we were soon on first-name terms. He introduced me to all his comrades. I remember

particularly Guillermo Garcia, the first farmer to join the Fidelistas, and Luis Mas Martin, Chief of the Propaganda Department of the Cuban Communist Party, who had been sent to the Sierra Maestre as the Party's representative. The latter soon gave us his appreciation of the Castro brothers. Fidel, he told us, was not a Party member, and in the mountains he had read Mao in preference to Lenin; but Raul had long been a Communist, and was now a member of the Politburo. The Party was at present trying to use him to influence Fidel. 'Personally,' concluded Mas, 'I think Fidel is an anarchist, but his hostility to the United States will drive him into the Party's arms, especially if the Americans continue to react so stupidly.'

'It could be dangerous,' I commented, 'to provoke a country as powerful and close by as the United States.'

Mas smiled. 'Not any longer. We calculate that it is now too late for the Americans to use force against us.'

The villa was of course tapped, but we learned nothing from our bugs that our guests would have been unwilling to tell us. The Cubans were completely honest and frank in all their discussions with us. Raul would even telephone Fidel for instructions in front of our interpreter - an StB man, naturally.

Lomsky arrived for dinner at the villa, very smart in his best uniform, promptly at six o'clock, but it was half past by the time we had roused the Cubans from their beds and brought them to the ante-room, some of them still without their jackets. The Cubans infuriated Lomsky, a stickler for protocol and discipline, by ignoring all the name cards on the dinner table and sitting where they pleased. When we pointed out they were in the wrong seats, they smiled charmingly and moved the cards round. By the time we had manoeuvred Lomsky's chair so that he could sit beside Raul, the Minister was white with anger, and his mood did not improve when one of our guests interrupted his formal speech of welcome.

After the meal, Lomsky and I retired with Raul to a small room for coffee and brandy and a serious private discussion. Lomsky came straight to the point.

'Why do you want tanks and heavy weapons?' he asked Raul.

'To liberate Latin America,' came the prompt reply, 'and to give the U.S.A. an unpleasant surprise if they attack Cuba. Our revolution is as important for Latin America as the Russian Revolution was for Europe.'

At this moment Raul's aide wandered in uninvited, nodded affably to the three of us, and began to stroll round the room gazing at the pictures on the wall. Lomsky watched him with bulging eyes and mounting colour. The Cuban paused in front of a spectacular painting of a nude; after a few moments' contemplation, he sighed appreciatively.

'What a beautiful firm body, and such lovely full-blown breasts.' He traced them with his hands. 'And, you know, her eyes seem to follow you everywhere!'

Raul, forgetting all about tanks, jumped up to have a look, and the two young men launched into an animated anatomical discussion. When Raul returned to our table, his aide joined him, seating himself on the arm of his chair. Lomsky made frantic signs to Raul to get rid of him, but Raul ignored them; calling for an extra glass, he poured brandy for his comrade, who treated us all to one of those winning Cuban smiles.

In the ensuing conversation it became clear to us that Raul had no real idea of his needs. He was very cool towards Lomsky's suggestion that the Soviet Union could meet them better than Czechoslovakia. Eventually Lomsky extracted from him a categorical statement that he was approaching the Czech Government officially for help in building up Cuba's defences. On this basis Lomsky authorized consultations between the Cubans and our own experts to discover their exact requirements. But he made it clear to Raul that his brother must accept Czech technicians and advisers to train his troops in the use of our equipment.

Raul's visit lasted six weeks, although his delegation was soon reduced when medical checks, which he insisted all of them should undergo, revealed that four had venereal disease. Despite their entreaties, Raul sent them home immediately. This was politics, not puritanism, for Raul himself was no laggard in debauchery. Every night of his visit I went with him to some nightclub, where we would stay drinking and dancing with the hostesses until the small hours. The trouble was that I had to be at my desk at eight o'clock every morning, while Raul slept on till mid-morning. I would also procure blonde girls for him to sleep with - he was obsessed with blondes. I had to bring them secretly to his villa, because officially I should have reported the matter to the Politburo, and the StB would have produced some Secret Police 'social workers' for him.

In those days I liked Raul enormously, and we would spend hours talking about every conceivable subject - from high policy to girls. He was very honest and naive then; he did not understand Party conspiracy. But for all his playboy habits he was no fool. Behind his dark, mirror-like eyes, which reminded me of a cat- I nicknamed him 'little fox" - there was a good brain and a clear mind, and he was very quick to learn; he soon grasped the principles of military policy, for example, when we explained them to him.

As sons of a very rich father, both the Castros had enjoyed a privileged education. Raul told me he had run away from a Catholic seminary at the age of eighteen. He was very amusing about the initial reactions of the Americans and the Russians to Fidel's rise to power.

'The American Ambassador in Havana,' he said, 'told his Government in his dispatches that there was no need to fear Fidel. As the son of a Capitalist he would present no serious threat to the Capitalist powers. The Soviet Ambassador told his Government that, as sons of a wealthy bourgeois, we could not be trusted - hence the indifference of the U.S.S.R. towards us.'

After Lomsky's agreement on the arms question, we worked the Cuban delegation quite hard. But on 'rest days' we would take Raul to shoot and fish in the deep Brdy forests near Prague. These were reserved exclusively for Politburo members and their guests, and no feudal landowner enjoyed such well-protected privacy as they did. The trees on the perimeter, which ran for thirty or forty kilometres, carried red and white notices saying 'Entry forbidden', and Security Police with guard dogs patrolled the forest - they even watched us while we fished.

Other Ministers as well as Lomsky accompanied us, and Raul would take the opportunity to ask them pertinent, and sometimes awkward, questions about our relationship with the Soviet Union — they became more awkward after his visit to the country. We of course tried to convince him that this 'fraternal' arrangement was between equals, that it was only logical, and that it had our warm approval.

'Do the Soviets have access to all your military information?' I remember him asking.

'Yes. Soviet generals and officers sit in the Ministries of Defence and the Interior. They have at their disposal the same information as our own Ministers.'

'Ah yes,' purred Raul. "And arc your officers also in the Soviet Ministries?'

'No.'

'Why not? Don't they trustyou?' Our younger officers were always asking the same questions.

'It is not a question of lack of trust. The Soviet Union is the decisive force in the struggle between Socialism and Capitalism, and so it is in our own interest that they should keep details about their military strength secret.'

Raul said nothing.

The working sessions with the Cuban delegation made good progress and culminated in a meeting between Raul and Novotny, by this time President as well as First Secretary, at the Hradcany Palace, scheduled for 9 a.m. At that hour Raul was still in bed.

'For God's sake go and wake him,' I pleaded with his aide.

'I already did,' he answered, 'and got a boot thrown at my head.'

It was well after eleven when we brought Raul at last to the Palace, but nobody said a word about his lateness. Novotny promised Raul that we would send him weapons, but told him categorically, 'This is on condition that Cuba's democratic revolution progresses in a Socialist direction.' He also extracted guarded assurances that Fidel was ready to join the Communist Party, and that the Cuban Party would have a leading role in the development of the revolution. He added another warning to Raul.

'Your brother's altitude towards China will be the touchstone of our policy towards Cuba.' But he softened his words by presenting Raul with a new Skoda sports ear.

The Chinese, of course, had not neglected the opportunity presented by Raul's visit, though we warned Raul that the Chinese were in no position to send him tanks and heavy equipment. The day after his arrival an invitation arrived for him to dine with their Ambassador. Raul told me afterwards that the dinner was superb. The Chinese persisted in their efforts to woo him. Every day a copy of the National Chinese News Agency bulletin arrived at the villa, printed in Spanish.

In the meantime, our Soviet allies, we felt, were missing their chance. When I telephoned their Ambassador, Mikhail Zimyanin, and suggested they ought to talk to Raul, he replied that diplomatic protocol required the Cubans to make the first move. Diplomatic

protocol! It meant nothing to the Cubans, so I immediately contacted General Aleksandr Kuschev, the chief Soviet military representative in Czechoslovakia.

Kuschev at once appreciated the strategic importance of Cuba, and telephoned Marshal Andrei Grechko, the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Land Forces. Grechko, who was Khrushchev's brother-in-law, spoke to him over dinner the same night, and the next day Raul received a personal invitation from Khrushchev to visit Moscow.

Fidel Castro, as I have mentioned, was at this time far from friendly towards the Soviets, and had instructed his brother to make no move to contact them while he was in Prague. Moreover, in Cuba Fidel had liquidated a number of old Party cadres and arrested some officials, including the Party Secretary. Now, however, he agreed to Raul's visit to Moscow.

Raul spent a week there, including three days in the company of Khrushchev. He returned to Prague full of admiration for him — 'I am a Khrushchev fan,' he told me - but full of anger and contempt towards the Soviet Marshals.

Soon after this visit, Novotny received orders from Khrushchev to do everything necessary to meet Cuba's military requirements, 'in order to drop our Communist anchor in Havana'. At the same time, our Minister of the Interior signed an agreement with the Cubans covering intelligence co-operation in Latin America. Khrushchev wanted to avoid a confrontation with the United States at this time and he had no wish to involve the Soviet Union directly with Cuba in a Caribbean revolution. As usual, therefore, we acted as their stalking horse.

We sent a series of missions to Cuba, including agricultural experts, technicians, doctors, and of course StB men to help Fidel to 'keep order'. Only the actual training of the Cuban armed forces remained from the beginning in the hands of Soviet generals and advisers. General Gusev, the grim Stalinist soldier who had terrorized the Czech Army in the 1950s, flew over there as chief adviser. But while sunbathing one day on a beach he suffered a heart attack and only his remains returned to Russia. Eventually, Soviet experts took over the functions of all the Czech advisers.

Good friends though we had become, I was quite glad when Raul took his delegation back to Havana; six weeks of looking after them

had left me exhausted. I saw Raul whenever he returned to Prague, until 1965, by which time he was a different person from the naive and charming youth I had first known. Every time I saw him he seemed to have changed a little, and for the worse. He became more and more arrogant and authoritarian until he was behaving like the Soviet Marshals he used to despise so much. He seemed to be just another conceited bureaucrat, without a spark of humour, and I no longer bothered to see him.

His comrade Che Guevara was totally different - full of fire, and contemptuous of the bureaucratic Communist state. He visited Czechoslovakia as Cuban Minister of Trade. With his black beard and restless eyes, wearing a partisan uniform with a pistol on his hip, he looked to us like a true revolutionary. We younger officers also admired the way he defended his own views against anyone, however exalted. He insisted that Cuba had every right to foment armed revolution in Latin America - something to which, for tactical reasons, the Soviets were strongly opposed - and to use the weapons we were sending them for this purpose. The Soviet and Czech leaders dismissed him as an anarchist.

I shall always remember the occasion when our own Trade Minister rashly offered him a 'Havana' cigar made in Prague. He was furious.

'How is this possible?' he shouted. 'A Havana cigar made in Czechoslovakia! Havana cigars are made in Cuba, and only in Cuba, and you have no right to use our label on it. You're as bad as the worst Imperialists!'

The only member of Raul's delegation to return to Prague was Guillermo Garcia, the farmer. In April 1961 I had a call from the Foreign Ministry to say a lunatic Cuban had landed at the airport, asking to see the Minister of Defence; nobody knew what he wanted. I hurried out there with an interpreter to discover that Garcia wanted a pair of Angora rabbits. Apparently Fidel had some strange idea that Angora rabbits would keep Cuba well supplied with meat and wool. I eventually found a pair with the help of the Ministry of Agriculture, but Garcia had to wait a while in Prague before he could take them home, because three days later came the landing in the Bay of Pigs.

In June 1961, Khrushchev met President Kennedy in Vienna for the first of their summit talks. He went there without any of the false optimism he had felt earlier. He simply hoped to induce Kennedy, and through him the Western world, to adopt a softer line towards the Communist bloc, shed some of its Cold War outlook, and give the policy of peaceful co-existence a helping hand. He also hoped to make some progress on disarmament, for the Soviet Union at this time was worried about German rearmament. Above all, he hoped to improve economic relations with the West and gain access to Western technology and trade.

On his way back to Moscow he briefed Novotny on the outcome. He described Kennedy as an intelligent man - so I heard afterwards from Antonin - with whom it would be possible to work out an accommodation on the lines of peaceful co-existence. But he appreciated Kennedy's difficulty in changing overnight the almost traditional hostility of his countrymen towards the Soviet Union. Khrushchev's conclusion was that the Eastern bloc should be discreet in its attacks on the West, and concentrate them on the Cold Warriors - 'We must divide the West, not unite it by crude attacks on Capitalism.' But that did not mean, he went on, that he would restrain the international Communist movement; on the contrary, one of the principal objectives of his policy was to improve the climate for world revolution. 'As Prime Minister of the Soviet Union I could promise Kennedy many things,' he told Novotny. 'But as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. and leader of the world Communist movement, my hands are still free.'

The Russians did not, of course, notify the satellite countries of their intention to install intercontinental ballistic missiles in Cuba; nor did they ever explain to us their reasons for bringing the world to the brink of war. The first we Czechs knew of it was in February 1962, when we prepared our Military Operational Plan for the coming year, to co-ordinate the action of our forces with the other Warsaw Pact countries in the event of war. The plan was based on documents and maps supplied by the General Staff of the Pact, which included provisions for both localized nuclear war in Europe and global atomic war; not until 1963 did our plan envisage a conventional war in Western Europe.

On the outbreak of nuclear war with the United States, these documents indicated, a small first wave of rockets would be launched

to reach some of the principal American cities, to be followed by the main wave. There was no explanation for this, but General Otakar Rytir, our Chief of Staff, told Novotny and our Military Committee that he supposed the rockets would be launched from Cuba.

As we know, in October 1962 Khrushchev had to give way and remove the missiles. The crisis proved to be the second serious challenge to his leadership - the first had resulted from the events in Poland and Hungary in 1956. His principal critics were from the armed forces, the K.G.B., and the Stalinists in the Party hierarchy. They protested that Kennedy was bluffing. In particular, they condemned Khrushchev for having weakened Soviet bargaining power by his massive troop reductions and by his failure to build up a strong Navy. If the Americans could threaten, they said, so could the Soviet Union - by promising that any strike against the bases in Cuba would be followed by instant retaliation against Berlin. And how was it, the critics asked, that the Americans found out about the missiles before they had become operational? The K.G.B. had some questions to answer here, and so did the First Secretary, under whose direct authority it operated.

Khrushchev defended himself in a secret speech before a meeting of the Central Committee. He pointed out that he had achieved an important strategic goal, in that Kennedy had agreed not to invade Cuba. Thus the island was saved for Communism and would be available when needed to support the 'progressive movement' in Latin America. As for calling Kennedy's bluff, he pointed out that a devastated homeland was too high a price to pay for such heroics.

His reductions in the armed forces, he argued, had been necessary to improve the Soviet economy, on whose strength they depended. The people's living standards had improved, the Party's popular support and authority had increased, and a sound base for future military growth had been laid. It was true that the U.S.S.R. needed a strong Navy, but hitherto he had had to give priority to the economy; only now could Naval construction go forward.

Khrushchev's spirited defence silenced his critics for the moment, but Cuba left his position permanently weakened. I often wonder why he ever tried to install those missiles in Cuba, and I do not believe his own explanation, which was that he was trying to defend Cuba from American attack. I believe he gave in to pressure from the military hierarchy, who thought the missiles would give the U.S.S.R.

strategic superiority. I think he let himself be persuaded that their existence could be concealed, at least until they were fully operational, by which time he could use them as bargaining counters to reduce U.S. strategic threats elsewhere. It does not say much for the intelligence of Khrushchev and the military that they thought they could get away with it.

The Soviet Politburo immediately set up a committee to investigate how the Americans had learnt about the missiles so quickly. The chairman was Leonid Brezhnev, a protege of Khrushchev. In Czechoslovakia, and presumably in the other satellite countries also, the Security Police and military counterintelligence services thoroughly investigated everyone, from the Minister of Defence down, who might have had access to this information. The counter-intelligence people went so far as to rip out the panelling in the Minister's office and in the conference room of the Ministers' Collegium in a search for hidden microphones. The investigation continued until November when news broke of the arrest of the Soviet Colonel Oleg Penkovsky.

Penkovsky was executed early in 1963 for supplying strategic information to the West. Khrushchev took advantage of the fact that the leak had occurred in the Army to discredit some of his most severe military critics. One marshal was even demoted to the rank of major-general.

Khrushchev did not consult Castro at any time during the missile crisis. In his defence before the Central Committee he admitted that he owed Castro an apology, but justified his behaviour on the grounds that Castro owed a duty only to Cuba, whereas his own responsibility was to the whole world. He sent Anastas Mikoyan to Havana to deliver his apology. The disgusted Cubans kept Mikoyan waiting for days for an interview with Castro. While he was in Cuba, Mikoyan's wife died, but Khrushchev would not let him come home until he had completed his mission.

When at last Mikoyan saw Castro he found him deeply bitter over Khrushchev's behaviour. Castro said it was not enough to make a personal apology to him; Mikoyan must explain the Soviet position to the Cuban people. As a result, the wretched man found himself addressing stormy meetings where he was insulted by his audience and even pelted with rotten fruit. When he left Cuba he collapsed and had to be sent to a sanatorium to recover.

Months later, when President Kennedy was assassinated, all flags were lowered to half-mast in Czechoslovakia. This was an unusual tribute to the leader of an Imperialist country, but the Politburo authorized it officially for a number of reasons. In Eastern Europe we thought of Kennedy as a new type of Western statesman, totally different from Eisenhower, who would lead the West into a new era of peaceful co-existence; even the Soviets thought it right to give Kennedy due recognition as a 'realistic' politician.

Secondly, this official tribute was designed to forestall any spontaneous - and therefore unlawful - public demonstration of sympathy for the murdered President. The StB and armed forces were nonetheless alerted to deal with any outburst that might get out of control. The Party well knew that for the Czech people Kennedy was a symbol of freedom, and they would greet his death with deep and widespread sorrow.

5

The Sino-Soviet Split

The dispute between Soviet Russia and Communist China really began when Khrushchev emerged as Stalin's successor and made his historic speech to the 20th Party Congress condemning Stalin. Mao soon came to resent the new Soviet leader's growing prestige; in particular he felt affronted that Khrushchev failed to consult him before initiating the drastic changes involved in de-Stalinization. He was also worried about the effect of Khrushchev's new policy on the unity and spirit of the Communist bloc, from which China received so much material and moral support.

The Chinese disapproved, too, of Khrushchev's policy of peaceful co-existence. They thought it was a betrayal to Imperialist interests of the progressive movement in the Third World. Finally, they complained that the Soviet Union was not giving them enough support, military and political, on such issues as Taiwan. They were furious when Khrushchev wisely backed out of an earlier undertaking to provide them with nuclear weapons.

All these differences were in fact subsidiary to the real area of conflict: the leadership of the Communist world. In the long term it was impossible for two such gigantic powers to work together in harmony within the monolithic structure of the Communist system. Peking began to insist that it represented an alternative centre of Communist truth, and to vie with Moscow for the leadership of the world Communist movement.

The first hint we had of the split was in 1958, after General Lomsky led an official visit of senior officers of our armed forces to Peking. This was part of a programme of exchanges initiated in 1956 by the Soviet Union to strengthen Communist ties. Its objectives

were to impress the Chinese with the efficiency of Soviet military organization, to sell Czech weapons to the Chinese, and to bring the Chinese Party closer to the rest of the bloc. This was the first high-level military delegation from Czechoslovakia to China, and we attached great importance to its success.

Lomsky toured factories, farms, and Army units, and was greatly impressed by all he saw. Chinese military training and discipline were outstanding, as was their grasp of Marxist principles. something which astonished our delegation who were used to a much lower level of ideological enthusiasm in our Army.

The tour ended with an interview with Mao Tse-tung. The Chairman made no mention at all of the Soviet Union, but using suitably Marxist phraseology he affirmed it was China's responsibility to develop a new theory and practice of Communism in Asia.

'It is anti-Marxist,' he added significantly, 'to rest on the principles expounded by the great Marxist leaders. Only by following this new route will China achieve the status of a first class power.' He concluded with the observation that other Communist countries would develop faster if they exercised their right to follow their own path.

The only member of the Czech delegation to realize that Mao's philosophy posed a challenge to the Soviet Union was my old friend and fellow student, General Prchlik, now Chief of the Main Political Administration of the Defence Ministry.

On their way home the delegation stopped in Moscow. In his innocence, Lomsky waxed enthusiastic about all he had seen in China, quite unaware of the adverse effect his words were having on Marshal Rodion Malinovsky, Minister of Defence, and the other senior Soviet generals present. Marshal Ivan Konev, Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Pact, cut short Lomsky's enthusiasm for Mao's collectives by snapping at him: 'My experience tells me we should never trust these Asian fanatics!'

On his return to Prague, Lomsky reported the success of his visit to our Politburo. Unconscious of the feelings he had stirred up in Moscow, he obtained Party approval to organize a propaganda programme in the armed forces, promoting Czech-Chinese friendship and extolling the achievements of Mao Tse-tung. After he had made five major speeches on the subject I received an unexpected visit from General Korotkov, the Soviet adviser to the

Chief of Staff. Over a glass of vodka he asked me bluntly if Lomsky was pro-Chinese. For a moment I thought he had taken a glass too many; I had never before heard the expression 'pro-Chinese'. Hitherto the only question had been whether someone was pro- or anti-Russian.

'It is only necessary to listen to the Comrade Minister's speeches,' he continued, 'to become aware of his sympathies for the Chinese.'

'The Comrade Minister,' I explained patiently, 'has not been speaking as an individual; he was only following the Party line.'

When he understood Lomsky had received his instructions from the Politburo, after consultation with Moscow, he relaxed and abandoned the subject. When he had left I rang my friend Prchlik to report Korotkov's suspicions of Lomsky. He laughed. 'Don't worry, Jan. Only yesterday Korotkov asked me if you were pro-Chinese.'

It was not until April 1960 that the differences between Russia and China came into the open, with a series of articles from Peking entitled 'Long Live Leninism', which concentrated on the ideological dispute. In June, Khrushchev directly attacked the Chinese at a Rumanian Party Congress. In November, the World Communist Conference of Eighty-One Parties took place, called by Khrushchev to win approval of his policy of peaceful co-existence, and to affirm Moscow's hegemony over the Communist movement, now challenged by China. The conference concluded with a communique wholly favourable to the Soviet Union, but the two sides had, in fact, engaged in violent altercation inside the conference, with the Chinese refusing to refrain from 'factional activity'.

The Russians discovered what underlay the Chinese attitude early in 1961 when their intelligence sources obtained copies of a secret letter circulated to Party cadres in China. It blamed the Soviet Union for the disunity in the Communist movement and accused the Russians of planning a military attack on China. Hitherto, the Chinese Party had deliberately played down the split; this letter marked the opening of an internal propaganda campaign to brief the cadres fully on the subject. The letter blamed China's economic problems on the withdrawal of Soviet advisers in 1960. It also charged the Soviet leaders with having abandoned Communism

and, while falsely claiming to be the vanguard of Marxism, having established a bourgeois democracy in the U.S.S.R.

Efforts to reconcile the two Parties ended when Khrushchev denounced Albania in October 1962 and broke off relations with Tirana a month later. Russian support for India in the 1962 border crisis with China, and Khrushchev's surrender to Kennedy over the Cuban missiles, confirmed the Chinese in their belief that the Soviet Union would pay any price for an understanding with the United States. The Soviet rapprochement with Yugoslavia, expelled from the Communist movement by Peking in 1960, widened the breach. Throughout 1963 there were further attempts to bring the two powers together, but they all failed.

The Chinese wished to avoid a complete rupture; they wanted to remain inside the international Communist movement in order to veto any hostile Soviet action. More than that, they hoped to promote factionalism and split the Communist Parties, establishing new ones under their own control. To counter this threat the Russians were driven to making a formal break.

In the autumn of 1963 and again in 1964 the Soviet Union tried to call international Party meetings to repudiate the Chinese, but they were foiled by opposition from the Rumanian, Italian, Polish, and Cuban Communists. Their failure to impose their will on 'fraternal' Parties was a grave embarrassment to the Russians; but the fact was that many Communist Parties held aloof from the dispute, and some of them were secretly in sympathy with the Chinese. Only the Albanians actively took China's side, although the North Koreans and North Vietnamese often followed the Chinese line. They told us privately that they had little choice, the North Koreans adding that the Chinese could wipe them out just by suffocating them with straw hats. Khrushchev had good reason to be concerned about his ability to preserve Soviet leadership among the Western Communist Parties and those of the Third World. The debate about his tactics in the dispute contributed to his downfall.

Until the Sino-Soviet split the Chinese had observer status in the Warsaw Pact and enjoyed a comprehensive exchange of military and general intelligence information with us. But by 1960 it was clear that this could not last. In that year, I recall, the Chinese representative at the political consultative meeting of the Pact in Moscow was Marshal Lin Pao. When Khrushchev made a speech analyzing the

international situation and the objectives and prospects of peaceful co-existence, Lin Pao interrupted several times, leaping to his feet, banging his fist on his desk, and denouncing the policy. It became evident that he was being deliberately provocative - sometimes he seemed quite deranged - and Khrushchev finally lost his temper.

'This meeting,' he shouted at the Chinese delegation, 'wants to hear more from you than critical abuse! We would like to hear some constructive alternatives to peaceful co-existence, if you have any to offer!'

Soviet economic and technical advisers were the first to leave China, in 1959. The last of a total of 12,000 military experts were all out by the end of 1960. In 1963, the Czech military and foreign intelligence services sent their first agents to spy in Peking. Hitherto we had only posted liaison officers there, and this significant development placed China on the same level as our Capitalist opponents.

In 1961 Colonel Kislitsev, Chief of Staff of the Soviet advisers in Czechoslovakia, told me that the Army thought Khrushchev had been too quick in withdrawing Soviet advisers from China. Kislitsev took the pragmatic view that the Army should have stayed as long as possible in order to provide the Party with good intelligence on Chinese intentions. His argument received support later from a Soviet Central Committee analysis of the situation in China, which we received in 1963, before Khrushchev's downfall.

I heard an enlargement on this analysis a few months later from the Soviet Ambassador Chervonenko, who had just been posted to Prague from Peking. He told me that Soviet Army advisers in China had reported in 1956 that Mao disagreed with the conclusions of the 20th Soviet Party Congress, and that his differences with the Soviet Party would inevitably widen. The Russians should have accepted this conclusion, he said, and made every effort to exploit the divisions inside the Chinese Party. Chervonenko believed that the Chinese had been stringing the Russians along for eight years in order to milk the U.S.S.R. of military and economic aid.

'No political solution is possible,' he concluded. 'We shall have to resolve the matter by military action.'

Nevertheless, the Kremlin persisted in its hopes of gaining control over China by political and economic means until Kosygin's meeting with Chou En-lai in 1965. The Politburo believed that after

Khrushchev's dismissal and the removal of the personal antagonism between the Soviet and Chinese leadership, and after the Soviet suc-cess in countering Chinese influence in the Third World and isolating China from the world Communist movement, the Chinese would be ready lor a reconciliation. Moreover, China was still in economic difficulties, and Liu Shao-chi's quarrel with Mao indicated political turmoil within the Party. Finally, China's own efforts for an understanding with the United States had come to nothing. The Soviet leaders hoped the Vietnam war would give them a last opportunity to bring China back into their Socialist camp. China, as the strongest supporter of Hanoi, was likely to come increasingly into conflict with the United States. In such a situation they would need help from international Communism and, in particular, from the Soviet Union.

In 1965 Kosygin stopped off in Peking, on his way to Hanoi, for a talk with Chou En-lai. According to the account we received of the meeting, it was a waste of time. The Chinese refused to agree to any common ground for discussion. The Soviet delegation had begun with a series of proposals for improving their logistic support to the North Vietnamese. Kosygin asked permission for Soviet pilots to ferry fighter planes to them through China; Chou suggested instead that Chinese pilots should fly them all the way from Moscow, which Kosygin refused. Kosygin asked the Chinese to make their railway into Vietnam available for Soviet weaponry and switch food supplies to the roads; Chou's counter-proposal was that the Soviet Union should divert more ships and send the weapons by sea. Kosygin asked if the Soviet Union might install anti-aircraft radar on the Vietnamese border, inside Chinese territory; Chou angrily accused him of trying to involve China in a war with the United States. When Kosygin suggested that the Warsaw Pact should send 'volunteers' through China to help the North Vietnamese, Chou became even angrier. China, he said, would regard that as an infringement of its sovereignty.

'The Vietnamese,' he went on, 'are perfectly capable of fighting this war themselves. If they falter, the Chinese people will come to their aid just as we helped the Koreans.'

'But China,' protested Kosygin, 'has already threatened eighteen times to intervene on the Vietnamese side if the war escalated further; so far your threats have been only propaganda.'

'China,' retorted Chou, 'need answer to no one, least of all the

Soviet Union, for her decisions. Yon have missiles. If you want to, you can stop the Imperialists in Vietnam at any time, Comrade Kosygin. All your proposals are designed to bring the Chinese people under Soviet control. I can assure you, you will fail,' he concluded, closing the discussion.

Kosygin's objects in visiting Hanoi were to demonstrate to the whole Communist movement that the Soviet Union supported the North Vietnamese; and, more important, to increase Soviet influence in the North Vietnamese Communist Party. The First Secretary, Le Duan, was said to be pro-Chinese, and the Russians were thinking of having him murdered; but he seemed to modify his attitude as a result of Kosygin's visit.

Nevertheless, Kosygin's military proposals to Hanoi fell on deaf ears. Feeling that the United States air forces were gaining an advantage over those of the Soviet Union through their combat experience in Vietnam, the Russians were anxious to send some of their own pilots to fight there. The North Vietnamese refused the offer, on the grounds that if they accepted Soviet 'volunteers' they would also have to accept Chinese — and the latter would never leave.

According to Kalasnikov, our official liaison with the Soviet Central Committee, Kosygin paid a second visit to Peking on his way home, to talk personally with Mao Tse-tung in a final effort to reach agreement. Although the Chinese had been unreceptive to his proposals for military help to Vietnam, Kosygin planned a broader appeal to the Party Chairman to close the gap between their countries. Both countries, he suggested, should first call a halt to the propaganda war, and then convene another world conference of Communist Parties to heal their wounds in public.

Mao's reaction was an outright snub; he refused even to take Kosygin seriously. He ridiculed the idea of a world conference, saying with a smile that China was ready at once to attend if the Russians would first make it clear to everyone that they had given up their 'absurd idea' of being the world centre of Communism. In desperation Kosygin proposed the formation of an 'anti-Imperialist front' of all Communist and 'progressive' forces, especially those in the Third World, to unify the struggle against the West. Mao rejected the idea out of hand as merely another device for asserting Soviet hegemony.

'We can draw only one conclusion from those meetings,' Kalas-nikov told us. 'The dispute with China will be a long drawn-out conflict, not susceptible to negotiation. The final solution must be military.'

As early as 1960 the Soviet Marshals pressed Khrushchev to strengthen Russian forces on the Chinese border. Khrushchev was opposed to the idea because he did not want to be accused of trying to settle ideological differences by military force. The following year Marshal Malinovsky told the Czech Army that the Russians had sent three more brigades to the Sino-Soviet border, but it was not until 1964 that the first regular Army units were posted there. In that same year the border Military Districts, like Khabarovsk and Amur, were changed from second to first echelon status. This involved a 500 per cent increase in troop strengths there, and the installation of tactical nuclear weapons.

The Red Army began to build up its own strength and construct bases in Mongolia in 1961, under the military alliance between the two countries signed in 1946. Mongolia, though nominally independent, had hitherto been regarded as a minor satellite of the U.S.S.R. But the Soviet leaders had been uneasy about Chinese ambitions there ever since the Chinese initiated a programme of aid to Mongolia in the mid 1950s. The Russians encouraged the Mongolians to emphasize their national identity, and brought them into the United Nations in 1961. Red Army strength in Mongolia and along the rest of the Sino-Soviet border continued to grow. In 1966, the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. issued a statement endorsing the Politburo's militant policy and authorizing the buildup of a strong military presence on China's frontiers. This gave new impetus to the colonization and development of Siberia.

In the autumn of 1966, Marshal Andrei Grechko, by then Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Pact, visited Prague to brief us on military policy towards China. At that time it was essentially a policy of containment. Soviet forces would have to be strengthened on the Chinese border, which would mean a temporary weakening of our defences in the West. We must be prepared, he said, in case N.A.T.O. tried to exploit this weakness.

Our conventional and tactical nuclear fire power must be

increased, To this end, the military budget of Czechoslovakia was raised by 20 per cent.

Later on Grechko explained to us that the U.S.S.R. intended to contain China within a new strategic perimeter, named the 'Operational Zone of the Asian Half Circle' and consisting of the Soviet Union and all those continental countries bordering on China. Fortunately, said Grechko, most of those countries were friendly towards the Eastern bloc and hated the Chinese. He admitted that the U.S.S.R. would need some help in manipulating their regimes, and said our assistance would be particularly useful in India and Burma.

In 1967, Grechko's ideas appeared in the Soviet High Command's Military Operational Plan, but with modifications, one of them being that in times of tension Czech troops would be sent to the Chinese border. This plan envisaged a purely defensive attitude for the Warsaw Pact forces in the East, because they were not yet strong enough there to play a more aggressive role. But Marshal Zhakarov, Chief of Staff and First Deputy Minister of Defence at the time, made it clear to us in Moscow that he was already thinking ahead to the time when it would become necessary to take 'preventive measures' against China. When that day came, the pessimists in our Army were sure we would be in the front line, and that we would have to march all the way to get there.

6

Balkan Problems

The Sino-Soviet dispute was a godsend to the Rumanian Communist Party leader Gheorghiu-Dej. A true hard-liner, he had consolidated his hold on the Party by a series of internal Party purges between 1950 and 1952, eliminating not only the many unsavoury opportunists who had joined it after the war, but even the Soviet-trained cadres- the 'Pauker group'. He had followed up with an intensification of the reign of terror begun in 1945 and which by 1958 had left him undisputed master of Rumania. He ignored the resolutions of the Soviet 20th Party Congress, knowing that for him de-Stalinization would have been suicide.

Under his regime, however, a new class of technical experts had arisen, which, under a few leading Party economists, was gradually pushing Rumania into a policy of industrial and economic expansion. The 1960 Party Congress approved a fifteen-year plan to turn the country into an industrial power. Two years later, the Soviet Union made it clear that Dej was running against the Comecon policy of industrial specialization in the satellites. Rumania was expected to concentrate on petrochemicals and agriculture and abandon its plans for broad industrialization.

Dej had no wish to oppose the Soviet Union, but he knew that if he gave in to them he would lose a great deal of support from the new cadres of technicians. Moreover, his attitude of neutrality in the Sino-Soviet dispute, regarded as provocative by the Soviet Communist Party, and his vigorous commercial initiatives towards the West to help industrialization, brought him great support from inside his country. For Dej was satisfying, admittedly for his own purposes, one of the strongest emotional needs of the Rumanian

people - defiance of the Soviet Union. But he was well aware that China's expulsion from the Communist movement would give the Soviets an ideal opportunity to impose their will on Rumania. He therefore spared no effort to encourage a dialogue between the two superpowers.

After 1960, two factors helped Rumania to maintain her precarious balance on this tightrope of neutrality. First, despite her differences with the Soviet Communist Party, there were no fears in the Kremlin that Communism was faltering in Rumania. There had been no internal liberalization. On the contrary, Dej and his successors ruled the country with an iron hand. Whatever Khrushchev may have felt about Dej's failure to de-Stalinize, at least the Party never lost control in Rumania, as it had in Poland and Hungary. Moreover, the Rumanians, by their skilful use of Marxist jargon and Leninist quotations in defence of their policies, allowed the Soviet Party no ideological pretext for direct intervention.

Secondly, unlike Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Rumania had no common frontier with the West and contributed only second echelon troops to the Warsaw Pact. The Soviet leaders did not feel it was worth incurring the odium of using military force against a country now here near as crucial to Soviet security as, say, my own.

Rumania's neutralism in the Sino-Soviet dispute severely strained her relations with the Warsaw Pact. The Kremlin even suggested that her Prime Minister, Ion Maurer, was a Chinese agent. In 1962 Novotny received a letter from Khrushchev instructing us to limit our intelligence exchanges with the Rumanians. We were to pass them no further information on China and pro-Chinese parties and regimes. Other forbidden subjects were political intelligence on the various Social Democratic parties, anything on Yugoslavia and Albania, and detailed intelligence on N.A.T.O. We were to confine our exchanges to general appraisals of the political and military situation in Western Europe.

The Soviet Union was anxious not to give the Rumanians any excuse to withdraw from either the Warsaw Pact or Comecon, and so they continued to attend all the main meetings of those organizations. But their presence at Warsaw Pact gatherings inhibited full discussion, and increasingly they were excluded from meetings on intelligence matters.

In 1963, the Soviet Union began to change the defensive role of the

Warsaw Pact to the offensive. The process involved, of course, increased expenditure on arms, which was of great economic benefit to the Soviet Union, the principal supplier of arms to the Pact. The Rumanians, however, refused to increase their military budget and declared that they would not carry out additional military manoeuvres except at Pact expense. Much more dangerous was their assertion that they saw no reason for military expansion since they did not believe there was any threat of aggression from the West. This was heresy indeed, and the Russians feared, with good reason, that it might spread to other members of the Pact. After a great deal of pressure, the Rumanians finally agreed to a small increase in defence expenditure.

If the Soviets expected an easier time after the departure of Gheorghiu-Dej they were to be disappointed. His death, in March 1964, was the signal for a fresh outburst of anti-Sovietism in Rumania from the Politburo down to local Party organizations. One of the first actions of Nicolae Ceaucescu, who became First Secretary, was to reduce dramatically the number of Soviet advisers in the Rumanian Army and Ministry of the Interior. He warned the remainder that they would not be allowed to attend any meeting to which they had not been specifically invited, nor would they be permitted to contact any officer directly for information. If they wanted a briefing they must approach the Minister of Defence or Ceaucescu himself. Furthermore, Ceaucescu ordered all Rumanian officers with Soviet wives either to divorce them and send them back to the U.S.S.R., or to resign from the Army. The Soviets, of course, had not allowed the women to change their nationality.

We were not surprised when in 1966 the Rumanians proposed changes in the command structure of the Warsaw Pact. They claimed it was not an organization of equals, but a fiefdom of the Soviet Union; that the so-called 'United Command' of the Pact did not exist, it was simply the Soviet General Staff. If the Pact was to be really effective, they insisted, it must be based on equality between nations, and this equality must be reflected in the structure of the Command.

They proposed, first, the establishment of a Warsaw Pact Command separate from the Soviet High Command, staffed by contingents from each country; secondly, they suggested that the posts of Commander and Chief of Staff of the Pact should be guided

by the Pact's Political Consultative Committee; and fourthly, that while all members should contribute contingents to the Pact, each nation should have the right to retain some of its forces under its own internal command.

On Soviet instructions, we and the Hungarians prepared a counter-proposal which was finally agreed after I defected in 1968; by then the Rumanians' tough attitude had been somewhat tempered by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Our proposal was that the Soviet Union should retain the Supreme Command; that a Military Committee of Defence Ministers of the Pact should enjoy limited responsibilities of supervision; and that there should be a Joint Command sitting in Moscow, drawn from officers of all armies. The U.S.S.R. was willing to integrate into the Warsaw Pact Command only those of its forces in the European theatre, which meant its main armies stayed outside the Pact's control. On the other hand, most of the satellite armies remained under the authority of the Pact. The Soviet Union's Military Operational Plan remained under the control of the Soviet General Staff, where real power continued to reside.

The Rumanians made a fresh demonstration of their independence from the Communist bloc, and their disagreement with Soviet policy in the Middle East, in June 1967, when they refused to attend an emergency meeting of the Pact to consider the implications of the Arab-Israeli Six Day War. But Ceaucescu was well aware that the Soviet Union would not stand by and watch Rumania leave the Warsaw Pact, and he was careful not to go too far.

The defection of Albania in 1960 had been a bitter experience for the Soviet Communist Party. I had visited Tirana in 1958 as a guest of the Minister of Defence, Begir Balluku, and stayed for three weeks in that ugly modern town. There were tempting views of rugged blue mountains rising steeply to the north and east, but no chance of being allowed a closer look at that splendid scenery. All I could see from the window of the Minister's office was a tree which Khrushchev had planted a few months before; now it was dying.

The political discussions I had with the Albanian military leaders - they had all been educated in the Soviet Union - hinted at disagreement between the Albanian and Soviet Parties over the 20th

Party Congress and Khrushchev's attempts at a rapprochement with Yugoslavia. At our welcoming dinner, Balluku gave a speech in which he expressed doubt about the need for condemning Stalin so profoundly; he even offered us a toast to the early murder of Tito. The Albanians were obsessed with the idea of re-integrating the Albanian minority in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo.

There were still plenty of Soviet advisers in Albania; indeed, there was a large Russian submarine base on the coast near Tirana. But it was obvious that Enver Hoxha, the Party First Secretary, enjoyed total personal power. His photograph and bust were prominent in every shop, school, cinema, and even church. By comparison, Stalin's personality cult seemed modest.

There were other, and grimmer, resemblances between the two tyrants. While visiting a collective farm I asked my escort if the kulaks had caused any problems. I was thinking of Czechoslovakia where most of those who had owned their own farms were naturally unwilling to put their hearts into collectivization.

'No,' answered my guide quite calmly. 'We killed them all.'

In 1959, Enver Hoxha paid an official visit to Prague; I accompanied him on a week's hunting trip to the castle of Padrt. He was a cold, abstemious man who seldom spoke. He was a keen hunter, although no marksman. Nevertheless, he was inducted as a Hunter of St Hubert. The traditional ceremony involved him laying himself across the carcase of a deer he had allegedly shot and receiving three blows from the (lat of a sword across his ample buttocks.

Hoxha was fairly outspoken in his criticisms of Soviet Party policy. When he returned to Tirana, he initiated various measures to put himself at a distance from the U.S.S.R. Among them was increased harrassment of Soviet advisers and their families, which by 1960 stretched Khrushchev's patience to breaking point. At the Political Consultative meeting in Moscow that year he interrupted a speech by Balluku, in which the latter was praising Soviet-Albanian friendship, and shouted:

'Don't lie to us! Your agents provocateurs have been spitting in the faces of our advisers, chasing their children, and stealing food from their homes! Is this a demonstration of your love for the Soviet people?'

Balluku rolled up his speech and left for Tirana without a word. Hoxha expelled the Russians from Albania, marched into the

Adriatic base, and seized all the Soviet equipment there except the submarines, which had put to sea. The Soviet advisers were lucky to escape with their lives.

In 1956 I became Secretary of the Military Committee of the Central Committee and acquired, for the first time, an insight into our policy towards Yugoslavia. It became clear from discussions in the Military Committee that our intelligence services had been deeply involved with the K.G.B. in a massive effort to undermine Tito. The Russians particularly valued our collaboration because of our historic links with Yugoslavia. In 1948 we helped them establish the illegal 'Communist Party of Yugoslavia', which they controlled from Moscow and which maintained, with our support, a clandestine apparatus in Yugoslavia in opposition to Tito. The Russians also established cells in Tito's trade union and youth organizations, and fomented unrest and sabotage in factories. They provoked a number of defections to the Soviet Union from Yugoslav diplomatic missions, and the K.G.B. went so far as to murder a few 'expendable' pro-Soviet Yugoslavs in such a manner as to direct suspicion on to Tito.

Stalin's death in 1953 signalled a lull in hostilities, but it was not until 1955, when Khrushchev visited Belgrade, that a reconciliation took place. Khrushchev told us at the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee in May 1955 that he had been anxious to weigh up Tito personally and meet some of the other Yugoslav leaders, to see if there was any scope for enticing Tito himself into closer ties with the Communist bloc. He acknowledged the considerable prestige that Tito enjoyed in the world, but instructed us to continue what he had begun by cultivating the Yugoslav Party and Army at lower levels. Our object was to create a core of sympathetic military, economic, and political contacts to supplement the underground pro-Soviet faction which we were secretly continuing to support. It had to be done secretly because Khrushchev had agreed during his visit to Belgrade to stop supporting the illegal opposition; as a token of his goodwill he had even abolished the Cominform - although of course this was pure deception. His interpretation of detente was not very different from his successors'.

Tension increased again soon afterwards with the formation of the

Warsaw Pact in May 1955. Tito regarded it as an instrument for giving the Soviet Union greater control over the East European countries, and as a threat to his own independence — even though Yugoslavia later accepted observer status in the Pact. But he enthusiastically welcomed the conclusions of the 20th Soviet Party Congress the following year, particularly the de-Stalinization campaign, which gave him hope that perhaps the Soviet Union would pursue a more tolerant policy. He made a triumphant visit to the Soviet Union in June 1956. The savage Soviet response to the Polish and Hungarian crises disillusioned him, however. Although he publicly endorsed Soviet intervention in Budapest, and even connived at the seizure from the Yugoslav Embassy there of the Hungarian Prime Minister, Imre Nagy, he strongly attacked the dominant 'Stalinists' in various Communist Parties.

From 1957, Chinese propaganda adopted a particularly uncompromising line towards Yugoslavia, but Khrushchev made it plain that there would be no reversion to the bitter conflict of the Stalin era. Although he attacked Yugoslavia's 'ideological mistakes', he urged continued efforts to reach an understanding. Despite the bitterness, and even abuse, in the exchanges between the Soviet and Yugoslav Parties, inter-state relations paradoxically remained good.

Tito strongly attacked the Chinese for their Stalinism, but adopted a milder tone towards the Soviet Union; he declared he was not seeking a fight with Moscow, but regretted that Yugoslavia was again alone in defending Socialism from degeneration. For after the Communist summit in Moscow in the autumn 1957, word went out to all the satellite countries to resume the offensive against Tito in ideological terms.

Relations between the Soviet bloc and Yugoslavia improved, however, with the widening of the Sino-Soviet breach in 1961-3. In 1962, before the fall of Khrushchev, his Deputy, Brezhnev, visited Yugoslavia, and Tito paid a successful return visit to Moscow. Tito had always admired Khrushchev because of his de-Stalinization campaign; while Khrushchev, despite the propaganda, had been content with Tito's foreign policies - as well he might be.

7

Peaceful Co-existence

In May 1958, at the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow, which I attended, Khrushchev made the principal speech. He analyzed the political and military situation throughout the world and outlined the tactics he believed the Socialist bloc should pursue. I say 'tactics' advisedly, because the basic purpose of Communist strategy remained the same - the domination of the world by Communism, as represented by the U.S.S.R. This purpose remains, and will remain, constant through every change of leadership; only the tactics vary.

One of the main themes of Khrushchev's speech was the need to develop a coherent policy towards N.A.T.O. The Kremlin was therefore looking for Western European leaders who would respond to the new Soviet line of peaceful co-existence. In the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, Khrushchev believed he had found a natural ally.

'He is a realistic politician,' he told us, 'who has come to understand that the post-war decline of the United Kingdom can only be arrested by taking new initiatives, not only in the under-developed world, but also in Europe.'

He was impressed by Macmillan's policy of 'decolonization', and by signs he detected that the British Prime Minister wanted to take a major part in improving relations between East and West. The Kremlin believed that Macmillan feared the resurgence of West Germany and that he had concluded that German revival owed much to the continuance of the Cold War. Khrushchev also thought Macmillan could be influenced by the possibility of economic benefits accruing from a rapprochement with the Soviet bloc.

Finally, he calculated that Macmillan might well respond to the suggestion that a friendly relationship with the U.S.S.R. would smooth the path of his colonial policy and make it easier for Britain to establish a good relationship with her former colonial territories.

In short, Khrushchev saw Macmillan as the kind of leader who would at least be willing to bring the West to the negotiating table; and he thought there were few others of his stature in Europe similarly disposed. Khrushchev despaired of the Labour Party.

'Compared to Gaitskell,' - he pronounced the name with disgust 'Macmillan is a progressive politician. The British Labour Party claim to be a working-class party. But Macmillan, the leader of the bourgeoisie, has a better understanding of the changes taking place in the world than the Labour leaders - they're still living in the nineteenth century! If Communism were to triumph in Britain tomorrow, Gaitskell would be the first to be shot outside the Houses of Parliament, as a traitor to the working class.'

After the 21st Soviet Party Congress at the beginning of 1959, Khrushchev again briefed the leadership of the East European Parties. He told us the Soviet bloc must change its thinking about Charles de Gaulle. Since he had come to power, Soviet intelligence about his private discussions indicated a more flexible attitude towards the Soviet bloc. At the same time, the Russian conclusion was that de Gaulle was obsessed above all else with the idea of reestablishing the glory of France. Khrushchev's hunch was that this would lead him to seek a distinct role for France, which would involve differences with the United States and de Gaulle's allies in Europe.

For the moment, though, said Khrushchev, there could be no public change in the Soviet attitude towards him, because it would be counter-productive to express approval of a leader generally regarded as a reactionary. Moreover, the French Communist Party, still violently opposed to de Gaulle, must give their consent to any volte-lace. Lastly, some of his policies, such as his development of a special relationship with Adenauer, were against our interests and should not be encouraged by any blessing from us for the new leader.

Novotny disagreed with Khrushchev's appreciation, and told him gloomily that he had no faith in de Gaulle and would not be surprised if his rise to power took France further along the road to Fascism. Still, he accepted Khrushchev's instructions for

Czechoslovakia to develop all possible contacts with France at both political and unofficial levels. It was essential, explained Khrushchev, to have good inside intelligence on de Gaulle's policies. Moreover, added Khrushchev, we could not exploit de Gaulle without a thorough knowledge of the attitudes towards him of the other Western powers. This was to be a high priority for our intelligence services.

Eighteen months later, at a meeting in Moscow of the Defence Ministers and Chief of Staff of the Warsaw Pact, which I attended, Khrushchev congratulated himself on the accuracy of his forecast that de Gaulle's chauvinism would lead him to weaken the unity of the West in pursuit of his conception of France's glorious destiny. Khrushchev evidently appreciated de Gaulle's single-minded egoism.

'It is apparent,' he told us, 'that he will not play second string to the United States. He has destroyed Fascism in Algeria and in France; now he believes he can deal with the Communist Party in the same way. It's up to our French comrades to see that he fails.

'I see every advantage,' continued Khrushchev, 'in supporting de Gaulle's attempt to build up France as a competitor to the United States. Of course, there is the danger that this may lead to an undesirable degree of power and influence in the world for the French, especially in the developing countries; on the other hand, the damage de Gaulle can do to N.A.T.O. and the solidarity of the Western allies will be well worth it.'

He told us Macmillan was meeting difficulties, notably strong opposition in Parliament and the City, in his attempts to reach an understanding with us. Although he would continue to cultivate Macmillan, Khrushchev now thought the French leader looked a better long-term proposition.

De Gaulle entered seriously into his assumed role as world leader; he made efforts to detach both Poland and Rumania from the Warsaw Pact. He was more effective in Rumania, but did not do badly in Poland. On his visit to Warsaw, he persuaded the Polish Party to let him give a speech on television in which he praised the achievements of the Poles and made a blatant appeal to their national feelings. Gomulka sent the Soviet Politburo a report on de Gaulle's visit, detailing the General's efforts to detach the Poles from the Soviet Union. They included the proposal to establish a non-74

military zone in Europe which would include Poland, and de Gaulle had offered to endorse the Oder-Neisse boundary with Germany to gain Polish support.

The Rumanians gave the Kremlin no information on de Gaulle's visit, but the Russians had all they needed from their own intelligence sources. We ourselves received a comprehensive report on the visit of the Rumanian Prime Minister, Ion Maurer, to Paris for political and economic discussions with de Gaulle. Maurer argued that Rumania wanted to pursue its own national course, but could not at present leave Comecon because her economy was too closely tied to it. In the meantime, she was determined to diversify her economy and forge closer links with the West.

De Gaulle assured Maurer that France would help Rumania to develop her independence and would give economic and political support. He would even sponsor Rumania if she wished to apply for associate membership of the E.E.C., and France would stand by her if she was isolated by the Communist bloc. As 70 per cent of her trade was with that bloc - 40 per cent of it with the Soviet Union - de Gaulle was talking nonsense. Not even the West, let alone France by herself, could sustain Rumania against a Comecon boycott. But de Gaulle went further: he suggested France as an alternative source of arms for the Rumanians, and undertook to support them if Warsaw Pact troops invaded.

Marshal Malinovsky's reaction to this military commitment is unprintable. However much we respected the French armed forces, we could not imagine they would be any help to the Rumanians in resisting a blitzkrieg from the Warsaw Pact. Our Military Operational Plan, as it then existed, assured that in the event of full-scale hostilities with France, the war would be over in two days.

'If de Gaulle ever tries to carry out his pledge to the Rumanians,' commented Malinovsky significantly, 'we shall know about it before his orders reach the French Commander-in-Chief

Nevertheless, de Gaulle's initiative with Rumania caused some concern to the Russians. In August 1964, during his last visit to Czechoslovakia, Khrushchev told us that they could tolerate Rumanian attempts to become economically independent of Comecon. 'But if they're so deluded as to try and leave the Warsaw Pact, then our soldiers, not de Gaulle, will have the last word.'

'Surely we've had enough trouble from the Rumanians,' interposed

Novotny. 'Perhaps it would be no bad thing if they *were* kicked out of the Warsaw Pact.'

Khrushchev was horrified.

'You are totally and disastrously wrong,' he growled at Novotny. 'That's exactly what the Rumanian leaders want. The whole Balkan situation would become untenable if Rumania followed Yugoslavia and Albania into the anti-Soviet camp. It's the responsibility of the Party to stop Rumania leaving the Pact and to re-unite Yugoslavia and Albania with our Socialist family.'

After the fall of Khrushchev, Brezhnev continued the policy of cultivating de Gaulle. One day in April 1965, I was sitting with some friends in the Slavia cafe in Prague, across the street from the National Theatre, when I saw four black chaikas pull up opposite. Out of them emerged Novotny and Brezhnev, who was making his first unannounced visit to Czechoslovakia since assuming power. Curious to discover the purpose of Brezhnev's visit and in no way satisifed by the non-committal bulletin published about it, I telephoned my friend Antonin Novotny. He invited me to lunch the following day at the Presidential Palace, where his father always turned up as regularly as clockwork at 1 p.m.

When I mentioned to our President that I had seen him with Brezhnev, he gave me an account of the visit, of which the most interesting part was the Soviet leader's remarks about de Gaulle. Brezhnev revealed that on assuming power he had sent the French President a letter expressing hopes for the continuation of friendship and co-operation. Brezhnev and the Soviet Party no longer thought of de Gaulle only as an instrument for weakening N.A.T.O. and the American presence in Europe. His veto of Britain's application to join the Common Market led Brezhnev to believe that he could use de Gaulle to weaken further the power of the E.E.C. At the same time, we should use every opportunity to promote anti-Gaullist feeling in Europe, and so drive a wedge between France and Germany.

At the meetings of the Military Committee of the Central Committee, the Minister of the Interior had been presenting us with excellent intelligence from the German Chancellor's office, ever since the early days of Adenauer's regime. We were therefore well placed to monitor German exchanges with de Gaulle. We had a complete record, for example, of the French President's confidential meeting with the

Chancellor in 1962, when they discussed the probability of France supplying tactical nuclear weapons to the German Army, and agreed that Britain was not yet ready to enter the E.E.C. Brezhnev thought there was plenty of scope for manipulation and trouble-making, and that we could use de *Gaulle's folie de grandeur* to weaken both France and Europe. The Russians were proud of their informants and influential agents within de Gaulle's entourage. For example, General Aleksandr Kuschev, the senior Soviet military representative in Czechoslovakia, gave us in advance the precise date of de Gaulle's withdrawal from N.A.T.O.

But Brezhnev was worried by the growing opposition to de Gaulle inside France and by signs that the Gaullist era was coming to an end. The Russians knew that many Frenchmen were becoming disenchanted with the General's overtures to the Eastern bloc at the expense of good relations with his Western allies.

'Comrade Brezhnev told me,' said Novotny, 'that it is essential for us to penetrate these opposition circles in order to find out how influential they really are, and how we can best neutralize them. Our Soviet comrades are even thinking of bringing up that old scheme of a Treaty of Co-operation and Non-aggression with France, in order to boost de Gaulle's reputation as a statesman. This gesture, said Comrade Brezhnev, might also restrain de Gaulle's efforts to undermine Soviet ascendancy amongst our Warsaw Pact allies.

It seemed that Brezhnev was as concerned as Khrushchev to preserve the unity of Eastern Europe, especially the status within it of Poland and Rumania.

8

The Fall of Khrushchev

Among Khrushchev's more endearing traits was his habit of self-criticism. At a meeting in Prague after his victory over the 'anti-Party' group he was not ashamed to admit to us that those who accused him of having been as much a Stalinist as Malenkov and Molotov were absolutely right.

'I cringed before Stalin like the rest of them,' he declared. 'The alternative was execution.'

But he went on to explain. 'The difference between the anti-Party group and me is that they wanted to bury the past, let it be forgotten. But I was determined to expose the wounds of Stalinism to the air, so that they might heal. There is no alternative if we are to avoid a repetition of Stalinism.'

The danger of a return to personal dictatorship still existed, he told us. Indeed, the behaviour of the delegates to the Soviet Party's 21st Congress showed that attitudes fostered by Stalin's personality cult still existed in the Party's ranks. One delegate after another had flattered Khrushchev, praising his leadership and placing him on the same pedestal as Stalin, until Khrushchev could stand it no longer. He cut short one speaker, and damned the whole Congress for a crowd of toadies who were treating him just as they had treated Stalin. Had they learned nothing? he angrily demanded.

Khrushchev once observed in my hearing: 'Stalin controlled my body, but never my mind.' What distinguished him from his competitors in the power struggle was that their constant prostration before Stalin had sapped their intellects.

On Stalin's death the Central Committee appointed Georgiy Malenkov as Party First Secretary and Prime Minister. But whereas

Malenkov, Beria, and Molotov all delivered eulogies of Stalin in Red Square and committed themselves to continuing his policies, Khrushchev significantly remained silent. Three months later, in July 1953, Beria was arrested, as is now well known, by officers of the General Staff while on his way to a Politburo meeting; they took him to a military barracks for trial on charges of spying for the West (patently absurd), plotting against the leadership, the murder of thousands of his fellow citizens (undeniably true), and a host of other crimes. Marshal Konev presided over the court martial and sentenced Beria to death; the sentence was carried out with appropriate ceremony by a military firing squad.

Although it was Malenkov who explained the case against Beria to the Central Committee, Khrushchev was the architect of his execution. He succeeded in convincing the other potential heirs of Stalin that Beria was plotting to achieve supreme power and liquidate them all. However great the danger from Beria - and his personal ambition and control of state security made him a serious threat - his death deprived Malenkov and his supporters of their most powerful ally in the coming struggle with Khrushchev. It removed the first barrier on the road to de-Stalinization, and gave Khrushchev a chance to start a purge of all Beria's supporters in the K.G.B. and to appoint a new man, General Ivan Serov, as its chief. Serov, although new to this post, had plenty of experience in the business. In 1940, after the Soviet occupation of the Baltic states, he had been in charge of the deportation to Siberia of a large number of the inhabitants; many died on the way.

In March 1953, Malenkov was 'released' from the key position of First Secretary of the Central Committee. The Politburo circulated a letter explaining that Malenkov was fully occupied by his duties as Prime Minister and, more ominously, that he had 'made mistakes' Over Beria. Khrushchev became First Secretary and began to consolidate his hold on the Party apparatus. The other Party leaders began to wake up to the threat he posed, but he was too subtle for them all.

In February 1955, Bulganin replaced Malenkov as Prime Minister. This was the result of a carefully organized campaign by Khrushchev, accusing Malenkov of having been involved in the criminal activities of the Secret Police under Beria, of having abused his personal power in the name of Stalin, and of stifling 'inner-Party

democracy'. In fact, Malenkov's behaviour had alienated many of the senior Party leaders, and so the appointment of Bulganin in his place quietened the fears of most of them.

Khrushchev's stategy was to play off his opponents against each other. He tackled Molotov in July 1955 by initiating a week's debate in the Central Committee on 'The Errors Made in Soviet Foreign Policy: Proposals for the Future'. The word 'errors' rang uncomfortably in Molotov's ears, since he was, and had been under Stalin, the Soviet Foreign Secretary. In the Communist system there is no such thing as an honest academic mistake; if there had been 'errors', someone - presumably he - would suffer for them.

Khrushchev used the debate to test reactions to his own ideas on a rapprochement with the West. He attacked Stalin's 'dogmatic' foreign policy, which had isolated the Soviet Union and caused the Capitalists to close ranks behind the United States, and had also driven Tito out of the Communist bloc. Khrushchev ended by calling for a sweeping reappraisal of foreign policy. The Central Committee endorsed his resume and approved his suggestions. For Molotov the writing was on the wall.

Molotov and his friends were now afraid that Khrushchev would use the 20th Party Congress, due in 1956, to appoint his own supporters to high positions in the Party and have his policies endorsed. In the autumn of 1955, I learnt of a plot to eliminate Khrushchev. I first heard of this conspiracy from Novotny when he returned to Prague from the 20th Party Congress. He warned me that Khrushchev needed support to carry out the decisions of that Congress and would face determined opposition from those who were behind the attempt on his life in 1955.

It seems that when Khrushchev visited Finland that autumn, the K.G.B., inspired by Molotov and Lazar Kaganovich, planned to arrest him at the border on his way back. They were going to take him off the train, charge him with anti-Party crimes in the service of Capitalism, and return him to Moscow for trial. Khrushchev himself doubted whether he would have got there alive. The plot was discovered in time by Marshal Georgiy Zhukov, then Minister of Defence, who immediately telephoned Molotov, warning him that he knew of the conspiracy, that his forces had complete control of Moscow, and that if anything happened to Khrushchev all those implicated would be shot. Molotov stridently protested that he knew

nothing about it, but significantly the plot never materialized. When Khrushchev returned to Moscow, he immediately launched an investigation into the K.G.B., for which, as First Secretary, he was responsible. He arrested the people directly involved, and dismissed hundreds of others.

Khrushchev mentioned this affair to us when he visited Prague in 1957, after the purge of the 'anti-Party group'. He ridiculed Molo-tov's denial of his own involvement, and told us that investigations had revealed a link between the K.G.B. officers concerned and the anti-Party group. After interrogating some of the conspirators himself, he had decided to keep the K.G.B. *under his* personal supervision.

'Even a doorman at K.G.B. headquarters,' he scoffed, 'believes he is superior to the Party First Secretary. They've been assured so often that they're the favoured sons of the Party that now they think they know better than the Fathers of the Revolution!'

As a result of the 20th Congress, the Soviet Party set up a 'Committee for the Investigation of the Mistakes made by the K.G.B. and the Judicial System'. Its duty, on the instructions of the Congress, was to apportion responsibility, and to rehabilitate victims. Among the *causes celebres* which it explored were the Moscow trials of the 1930s and the Leningrad Jewish doctor's case.

One of the main themes in the history of the purges which recurs to this day is the tension between the K.G.B. and the Army. The K.G.B. has always known how to manipulate the fears of the Party leadership in order to keep power over the Army. An example was the trials and executions of the Soviet Marshals and Generals before the war, which greatly reduced the Red Army's efficiency against the Germans. Even after the war, when the Army's prestige was at its zenith, the K.G.B. were able to have Marshal Zhukov, the most brilliant of the Army's commanders, exiled to a country command east of the Urals, just by playing on Stalin's paranoia.

The circumstances of Khrushchev's rise to power had a distinct bearing on his eventual fall. The three pillars of the Soviet state are the Party apparatus - that is the Politburo, the Central Committee, and the entrenched bureaucracy - the K.G.B., and the Army. Without strong backing from at least one of them, nobody can rule in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev's main support in the early days came from the Army. When he lost their support his days were numbered.

The alliance between Khrushchev and the Army sprang from their joint antagonism towards the K.G.B. The Army had suffered much from the attentions of the K.G.B. in Stalin's day. A good example, one of thousands or even hundreds of thousands in the armed forces, was the case of General Aleksandr Alexandrovich Kuschev, the senior Soviet military representative in Czechoslovakia from 1957 to 1968. He was the most congenial and, to me, the most helpful of all the Soviet advisers in my country. He was an Army career officer who had reached the rank of General when he was arrested in 1933, with many other officers, as a Western spy. Every day the K.G.B. interrogators went to his cell to demand that he sign a confession. He always refused, and so every day they beat him insensible. He nearly lost his sight from their treatment, but steadfastly refused to sign; after two years of torture he was brought to trial and sentenced to twenty-five years' imprisonment in Siberia.

'If I had confessed,' he told me, 'I would have received the death sentence.'

As a result of the purges and Stalin's unreadiness, the Soviet Army lost thousands of officers in the first German onslaught, and in desperation Stalin turned to the prison camps. Party representatives visited the camps and announced that Stalin and the Fatherland -those were their words - needed the help of all former officers, and all who rejoined the Army would have their ranks restored.

'Nothing could be worse than Siberia,' Kuschev told me, 'and so we all joined up.'

Kuschev had a fine war record. In 1945 he was in Berlin, a hero of the Soviet Union, the bearer of fifty-two medals, and Chief-of-Staffof one of the Soviet armies, with the rank of Lieutenant-General. When the war was over he requested, and was granted, leave to visit his home. He took a train from Berlin, but instead of his family waiting to greet him at the other end, he found two K.G.B. officers.

'Comrade General,' they said to him, 'you have served eight years in prison and four years at war; you still owe us thirteen years.'

They stripped him of his medals and his General's insignia, and sent him back to Siberia to finish his sentence. He was not released until 1957 —twelve years later —when the committee Khrushchev-had set up reached his case and decided to rehabilitate him. One month later he was sent to Czechoslovakia.

Despite his experiences, Kuschev never faltered in his devotion to

the Party. But he had a nicely developed sense of gallows humour. One of his favourite stories was about a new arrival in Siberia who complained bitterly to fellow prisoners that he had been sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment for doing absolutely nothing. His companions seized him by his lapels and angrily accused him of lying.

'You must have committed some crime,' they insisted. 'For doing nothing you only get ten years!'

In the beginning the Army's support for Khrushchev was unequivocal. The Army detested and feared the K.G.B., and Khrushchev knew that he must neutralize it if he was to triumph over his adversaries in the Party and if he was to avoid a return to Stalinism. He knew the K.G.B. would set its face against de-Stalinization, as well as against his policy of peaceful co-existence. But to control the K.G.B., the Party apparatus, and the Army, he needed strong friends in the Politburo, and, as will become apparent, he was too naive to know who his best friends really were.

Meanwhile, his intolerance of the K.G.B. brought him allies in other quarters, notably among the ordinary people of Soviet Russia. In 1963, when I visited Uzbekistan, I was shown over a model collective farm in Tashkent, which grew cotton. The Kolkhoz chairman, a typical Uzbek in his mid-sixties with a straggly 'Genghis Khan' moustache, asked me to send his regards to Khrushchev. I did so when I returned to Moscow, and Khrushchev was delighted.

'That man,' he told me, 'makes the best shish kebab in Uzbekistan.'

The previous year the K.G.B. had asked Khrushchev's approval to arrest the chairman because he had fought for the White Russians during the Revolution. Khrushchev, who did not believe it, had the man flown to Moscow, where he interviewed him personally. He soon discovered that he had joined the Whites in order to spy for the Reds, and could name witnesses to prove it, with whom Khrushchev checked the story himself. 'Thereupon,' he told me, T ordered the immediate arrest of the K.G.B. officers concerned, and acquired myself a good friend and an excellent source of shish kebab.'

The K.G.B. never supported Khrushchev; they just bided their time. They had sized him up perfectly, and they played constantly on his naivety and fears. One of the best examples was his treatment of Marshal Zhukov. Barely a year after he had saved Khrushchev's life in the plot of 1955, Zhukov was dismissed.

Zhukov was not ambitious for political power, but he was determined to reduce the authority of the K.G.B. and the Party over the Army. He particularly detested the counter-intelligence cadres. He placed a high priority on the modernization of the Red Army and the improvement of the quality of its manpower, and this enthusiasm led him to make a mistake. In a speech at Leningrad in 1956, he declared, 'Red Army officers should strive to become the best examples of Soviet intelligentsia.' The K.G.B. and Party apparatus seized *on* these words and built up a dossier on Zhukov's 'Bonapartism', which they handed to Khrushchev after the purge of the anti-Party group.

By this time Khrushchev was worried by Zhukov's prestige and influence in the armed forces, and foolishly let himself be persuaded that the Marshal was a threat to his own power. He therefore sent him to Belgrade on an official visit to Tito. Zhukov departed from Moscow with the usual pomp and ceremony due to a Minister of his rank and importance; but when he returned, there was only an aide with a car waiting to take him home. From his flat he telephoned Khrushchev, who told him bluntly that he had replaced him with Marshal Malinovsky. Zhukov in a fury threatened to call the armed forces to his help.

'By all means try it,' invited Khrushchev, 'but I think it's only fair to let you know that your telephone is no longer connected to the military communications system.'

Khrushchev then offered him the post of Commander of the Academy of General Staff. 'Go to hell,' answered Zhukov, and went fishing.

Khrushchev naively thought that with Malinovsky as Minister of Defence he would be able to control the armed forces himself.

He took another step towards personal control of the Army when in July 1960 he dismissed Marshal Ivan Konev from his post as Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Pact, and replaced him with his own brother-in-law, Marshal Andrei Grechko. We were not at all sorry when Khrushchev dismissed Konev, for he was the most arrogant and offensive of the Soviet Marshals, a loud-voiced, foul-mouthed bully who, when in his cups - as he usually was - would insult junior officers and even Generals in public, and sometimes resorted to violence. I once saw him tear the tunic off an officer who he thought was incorrectly dressed. The only person who was not

frightened of him seemed to be his batman, a much younger man, who spoke to him with the same arrogance as Konev used towards others. It was unbelievable to hear them talking together. The batman would answer back, as though to an equal, and I once overheard him rebuke his master for not taking his advice to go shopping in Prague by car instead of going for a walk.

'Shut up, you idiot!' shouted Konev.

'One of us certainly is an idiot,' retorted the batman as it began to rain, 'but it isn't me.'

No one could understand why this servant was so privileged. One theory was that he was having an affair with Konev's wife, who was very beautiful and thirty years younger than her husband, and that she protected him, but it was no more than a theory. It may be that Konev found sexual gratification not with his wife but through Western pornographic Alms, of which he was very fond.

Although we in the satellite countries were glad to see Konev go, we were not much better off under his successor. Marshal Grechko was a much quieter man, but just as arrogant and rude. I remember an occasion in 1964 when he decided to make a personal reconnaissance of the Czech-Austrian border. My Minister, Lomsky, escorted him there, and our border troops provided a boat, so that he could see it from the River Danube. We were together in the boat for two hours, during which time Grechko never uttered one word; he just sat there looking at the border and making notes. Finally Lomsky asked him if he had seen enough.

'W'hen I am thinking,' answered Grechko, 'you be quiet.' And he said nothing more to us.

I had a disagreeable experience with him myself just before an important meeting in a village on the Polish frontier. Our military delegation, under Lomsky, were the first to arrive, followed by Grechko and a large party of senior Soviet officers, who were staying at the best hotel in the nearest town. Our Politburo delegation was arriving later by train, and we were all supposed to meet them at the railway station. In due course Lomsky sent me to the hotel to collect Grechko. Standing outside his door I found a Soviet General, who told me Grechko was asleep. When I explained my errand he entered the room, rather to my surprise, and woke him. I stepped inside, presented myself at attention, and addressed him.

'Comrade Marshal,' I began, 'in two hours' time our Politburo

delegation will arrive at the station. My Minister has sent me to tell you he will be very happy to escort you there to welcome them.'

'Leave the room,' commanded the Marshal with quiet venom. 'I don't have to welcome your delegation. If the head of the delegation wants to see me, tell him I'm at this hotel.'

In truth, I cannot think of one Soviet Marshal or General, except Kuschev, who behaved towards us satellite nations with any courtesy or consideration.

Khrushchev's replacement of Konev by Grechko provoked bitter hostility between the two Marshals. It extended to their wives but not their daughters, who remained fast friends. On one occasion, I remember, Grechko was in Prague with his wife and twin daughters when Konev arrived with his family on their way to Karlsbad, where they took a holiday every year. Grechko's daughters asked for a car to take them to the airport to welcome Konev's children - they were by Konev's first wife - but Grechko and his wife refused; his wife was particularly adamant. However, her daughters were resolved to go, and so they borrowed a car from my Military Assistant, to whom they told the story.

Khrushchev thought he had secured his position with the Army with the appointments of Malinovsky and his own brother-in-law, Grechko. But he underestimated the consequences of his defence policies and the disenchantment they brought throughout the services. Konev was merely the most outspoken of his critics; opposition was widespread and increasing. His reduction of troop levels by three million men in only a few years, and his cutting of officers' pensions, were unpopular enough; but he also neglected the Air Force and reduced the Naval budget on the grounds that nuclear weapons and missiles had made both services largely obsolete. He also disbanded the conventional anti-aircraft brigades and sent their armament in aid to the Third World in the belief that the antiaircraft missiles had made them redundant. This left the Pact forces critically vulnerable, in the conditions of the time, to low-flying aircraft. His chickens came home to roost, first in 1958 during the Lebanon disturbances, when the Soviet Union could not face up to the U.S. Sixth Fleet; and later in the Cuban missile crisis, when Soviet naval weakness left him no choice but to either back down or resort to nuclear weapons, in which America still had superiority.

Khrushchev's authority in the Army suffered further erosion as a result of the Penkovsky affair, which enabled the K.G.B. to push him into a purge *of* the military hierarchy f*or* their failure to detect a major Western spy among them. Penkovsky's easy familiarity with senior officers made things much simpler for the K.G.B. Khrushchev-dealt ruthlessly with the Army, and used the scandal to rid himself of his bitterest critics, such as Marshal Zakharov. The 'resignations', however, further reduced Khrushchev's popularity with the armed forces and contributed to the political power of the K.G.B.

The Party apparatus was also becoming disillusioned with Khrushchev's high-handed methods. For example, when he went to Egypt and made Nasser a Hero of the Soviet Union, the first anybody in the Soviet Politburo knew about it was when they heard the news on the radio. Nasser had locked up all the Egyptian Communists he could find and they were still rotting in gaol when Khrushchev flew to Aswan. Even Novotny smiled when he told me of the Politburo's reaction.

The Party did not agree with Khrushchev's re-definition of Marxism to suit the purpose of peaceful co-existence, and they were worried by his overtures to the West, which exposed the Soviet bloc to ideological contamination. They considered his intemperate pursuit of de-Stalinization had brought about the crises in Poland and Hungary. Some cadres blamed him for being too lenient with China, believing military pressure might have been effective if he had applied it earlier. Many, of course, blamed him for his handling of the Cuban crisis. Finally, his internal policies came in for a great deal of criticism. His agricultural policy had been a disaster, in particular his ambitious scheme for the 'Virgin Lands', under which he wasted enormous sums of money and effort in trying to produce crops everywhere, even under the most unsuitable conditions. Once again he was a victim of his own naivety; he honestly believed, and stated, that in fifteen years he could make the U.S.S.R. equal to the United States and the West in the economic field, and he promised to give the Soviet people plenty to eat. Both, of course, were pipedreams.

Khrushchev threw away his assets like a profligate gambler, as the K.G.B. had always calculated, and often contrived, that he would. One of his strongest supporters in the struggle for power had been his former mistress, Madame Furtseva, the First Secretary of the

Moscow Party District Committee and Secretary of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. The First Secretaries of the Moscow and Leningrad Committees hold two of the most powerful positions in the Party apparatus; where their committees go, the Party usually follows. During Khrushchev's confrontation with the anti-Party groups and the plot against his life, Furtseva demonstrated her loyalty by rallying all the members of the Central Committee who lived in Moscow, and calling them to the Kremlin to demand the resignations of the anti-Party groups. Yet, after the 21st Party Congress in 1959, Khrushchev effectively deserted her by transferring her to the Ministry of Culture, where she was officially appointed Minister in May 1960.

Not content with alienating his strongest supporters, Khrushchev embarked on reforms of the internal Party structure which antagonized the whole Party apparatus. Designed to make the Party more amenable to central control and remove those who were too entrenched, they prevented Party members from serving more than two terms - a total of eight years - on the Politburo. There were, of course, exceptions for members of outstanding merit, such as Khrushchev himself. He added insult to injury by introducing a 'Moral Code of Communism', which looked suspiciously like the Ten Commandments, to regulate the private conduct of Party members.

We realized Khrushchev was in trouble in February 1962, after the arrest of our Minister of the Interior, Rudolph Barak, for embezzling large sums in foreign currency. When Barak's private safe was opened we found, besides a large amount of foreign currency, some files on Khrushchev's conversations and behaviour during his visits to Czechoslovakia. It was quite obvious that Barak would never have dared, on his own initiative, to compile a dossier on Khrushchev, and no one in our Politburo had authorized it; the K.G.B. must have put Barak up to it. It would have been tactically unsound, not to say highly undiplomatic, for us to hand over the dossier to Khrushchev in person. But it was an excellent opportunity to embarrass the K.G.B., and so we gave it to Brezhnev, Khrushchev's deputy, when he next came to Prague. We felt certain he would inform Khrushchev. But we reckoned without the intrigues of senior Soviet politicians; Khrushchev heard nothing of the matter until after his fall from power in 1964. Brezhnev, who was having an

affair with Barak's wife, was already plotting his benefactor's downfall in 1962. This was the man the naive Khrushchev trusted as his best friend - their wives were close friends too - whom he had made his First Deputy in the Party and Supreme Soviet, in place of such loyal supporters as Zhukov and Furtseva.

'He is not the smartest of men,' Marshal Grechko once said about Brezhnev in my hearing, before Khrushchev's fall. 'But Nikita Sergeyevich trusts him.'

Perhaps the most ominous sign for us that Khrushchev's power was on the wane came during his last visit to Prague, in August 1964. The Czech Politburo and senior Party officials, including myself, were waiting to greet him at the railway station, when Frantisek Pene, a Secretary of the Central Committee, remarked to us cheerfully: 'Now we shall have some fun again! Comrade Khrushchev is a great one for cracking jokes.'

The Soviet Ambassador, Mikhail Zimyanin, turned to him and said coldly, 'It is one thing to make jokes, quite another to run the Politburo. Do you think the First Secretary of our Party should be a clown? It is no laughing matter that Comrade Suslov accuses Nikita Sergeyevich of making anti-Marxist statements.'

This extraordinary outburst left no room for doubt: Khrushchev was in deep trouble if Zimyanin could allow himself such blatant criticism.

We read the signs, too, on Khrushchev's face when the train pulled in. He looked tired and despondent, and seemed to have lost his old vivacity. Even when he recovered a little there was a new bitterness in his sallies. Referring to his relationship with Kosygin, he remarked: 'Some people have said I have too much imagination. But I have told Kosygin that people without imagination evidently lack talent and should be sent to work on a co-operative farm.'

He cheered up a little during his official talks in the Hradcany Castle, where he described his foreign policy towards the United States as 'leading America to the grave with one arm around her shoulders.' He also gave us a shrewd and witty account of his first meeting with Mao Tse-tung.

'When I met him,' he said, 'I was scared, because I could see that one of his eyes was looking towards Washington, and the other towards our Siberia.'

Explaining the difference between Mao's attitude and his own, he

launched into one of his typical peasant allegories. Mao believed Communism could only triumph by force, he told us. 'But I prefer to follow my mother's example. When she wanted little Nikita to do some chore, she always tried to persuade me with a cake, but I well knew she kept a big stick in the cupboard. The Soviet Union must act in the same way towards the West. Mao's militarism will lead him to be incinerated. The Warsaw Pact should pursue a more subtle course, and only reach for the big stick if other methods fail.'

On the last day of his week in Czechoslovakia, Khrushchev seemed to recover his old ebulliance. At a picnic I organized for the Soviet delegation at a military hunting lodge outside Prague, he and Novotny were sitting round an open fire half tipsy, roasting sausages, when Khrushchev challenged our President to leap over the fire. W'hen Khrushchev jumped, his straw hat fell off and was burnt before we could recover it.

'You jumped so high to show off your youth,' Novotny said to flatter him.

'If a girl had said that to me,' came the reply, 'I'd say to hell with the hat. But as it's only you, you can buy me a new one.'

Khrushchev had a nice appreciation of irony. He told us how, when his economists started to draw up plans for expanding lorry production, they sought advice from a firm of American engineering consultants, who asked how many vehicles they wanted to produce. The Russians said they were thinking in terms of one hundred thousand. 'We know you're a rich country,' answered the chief consultant, 'but can you afford to produce such a small quantity?'

Khrushchev was only too well aware of the poverty in his own country, and was always hoping to raise living standards. During this picnic he admired the dresses of our wives.

'I tell our cotton growers,' he boasted, 'that they must produce enough cotton for every woman in Russia to have a pretty new dress every day and still leave enough to provide every American with a handkerchief to weep for Capitalism.'

He worried perpetually about the burden of defence expenditure. He was dismayed that the standard of living in the satellite countries was so far above that of the Soviet Union, and was convinced we had achieved it at the expense of making a fair contribution to the armed strength of the Warsaw Pact. I remember him criticizing Lomsky in 1963 for our penny-pinching attitude to defence. By this time his

Marshals, despite the setbaek in Cuba, had convinced themselves that the military balance between East and West was shifting progressively in their favour, and that the Warsaw Pact should be ready to use its military strength 'as the principal factor in the struggle for peace and socialism'. Khrushchev had been forced to go along with their plans for increased expenditure on armaments, but he knew we Czechs were dragging our feet.

'Some people,' he told Lomsky cuttingly, 'boast about how many cars they have in their country, while the Soviet Union bleeds to defend them. Russians prefer riding to walking too, you know.'

Nevertheless, he was concerned that defence was causing strains between the Soviet Union and the satellites. He was right, because the pressure on us to militarize our society, and the inflation it caused, had a lot to do with the birth of the liberalization movement in Czechoslovakia.

After his visit to Prague in August 1964, Khrushchev made a tour of the outlying republics of the Soviet Union, and returned to Moscow in late September. His travels had tired him, and he let his colleagues persuade him to take a holiday in the Crimea. They said he ought to rest, in order to appear fresh and fit before the people on the anniversary of the Revolution on 7 November; but in fact they wanted him out of the way while they prepared his downfall.

At very short notice, he was summoned back from his holiday to find the Politburo in session. Brezhnev, acting as Chairman, told him they had discussed his leadership and decided he should resign for the good of the Party. To make it easier for him, and to reassure the people - with whom Khrushchev was still a favourite — they proposed to inform the Party he had resigned for reasons of health; his Crimean holiday would lend substance to the story.

Khrushchev answered angrily that his health was excellent, he would not lie to the people, and he insisted on defending his position before the Central Committee. Brezhnev had been expecting this move and had been preparing for it during the last three months. At a Central Committee meeting convened the next day, both Khrushchev and Brezhnev explained their positions, Khrushchev fighting back with all his old pugnacity. But the leadership was united against him, and the final vote was unanimous to unseat him and nominate Brezhnev as First Secretary. Not even Khrushchev's brother-in-law, Grechko, voted for him. Khrushchev was the first

speaker to congratulate Brezhnev formally; then he left the meeting and went home. He had had no idea of the strength and solidarity of the opposition he had aroused.

Brezhnev was not nearly clever enough to have organized such a coup by himself. He merely acted as the figurehead for the Army, Party, and the K.G.B. He telephoned the news to all the First Secretaries of the satellite parties. He told Novotny that Khrushchev had resigned because of ill health; Novotny did not believe him, and told him so. Khrushchev, he said, had been perfectly fit, if tired, only two months ago when he had been in Prague. Brezhnev finally admitted that Khrushchev had been dismissed because of his poor leadership and faults in his domestic and foreign policies. Novotny warned him that there would be very strong and adverse reactions from the peoples of Eastern Europe at the news, and he complained bitterly that the Soviet Communist Party had made fools of the Czechs in allowing Khrushchev's visit at a time when Brezhnev must have known he was on his way out. When Brezhnev suggested that he himself should come to Prague to discuss the matter, Novotny told him bluntly that it would be no use. Khrushchev's visit had been a great success and there was a strong possibility of public demonstrations against the new First Secretary.

Novotny told me about this discussion.

'Comrade Brezhnev will never forgive you for being so outspoken,' I warned him. 'Sooner or later he will get even with you.'

The events of 1967 showed 1 was right.

Our Politburo issued a short communique on Khrushchev's departure, adding that it had 'surprised' them - a clear indication of dissent to the Czech people. The only First Secretary to welcome Khrushchev's departure was Gomulka, who described it as overdue; Gomulka in 1964 had moved a long way from his liberalism of 1956.

As I have mentioned, Madame Khrushchev and Brezhnev's wife Viktoria had long been good friends; they frequently made trips together to Czechoslovakia. They were on holiday in Karlovy Vary, taking the waters, and were having dinner when they heard the news of Khrushchev's overthrow on the radio. Both of them burst into tears and Viktoria tried to comfort Nina Khrushchev. A minute or two later the Soviet Ambassador Zimyanin came through on the telephone with instructions for Viktoria to prepare to fly back to Moscow. When she asked what was to happen to Madame

Khrushchev. Zimyanin said she should finish her holiday alone, because it was politically impossible for them to fly back to Moscow together.

'If I can't return with Nina, I won't return at all,' sobbed Viktoria, and banged down the telephone.

In the end, both Zimyanin and President Novotny had to hurry to Karlovy Vary to persuade Viktoria Brezhnev to return and to escort her to Prague. When she reached Moscow, she was greeted at Sheremotovo airport with all the ceremonial of a state occasion. Madame Khrushchev flew back on a scheduled commercial aircraft and had to queue for a taxi to take her home.

At the end of 1964 I witnessed an inept attempt by the Soviet Union to undermine Novotny's position. I was present, as Party First Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, at a session of the Central Committee. Vaclav David, our Foreign Minister - we knew him to be a Soviet agent - made a speech which began by attacking Khrushchev. He was immediately shouted down, but continued, unabashed, to sing the praises of Brezhnev. At the end he proposed that the Czech Party should follow the example of the Soviet Party, and separate the functions of President and First Secretary. Novotny naturally looked surprised - he held both positions himself— but he calmly put the proposal to a ballot, in which only David voted in favour.

A lew days later, young Antonin Novotny received a visit from a friend in the StB, who brought him a tape of a conversation between David and Zimyanin, recorded in the office of the former. On the tape Antonin and I heard the Soviet Ambassador carefully coaching and rehearsing David in the speech I had just heard him make at the Central Committee. Antonin played it back to his father over lunch. The President, choking with anger, immediately telephoned Brezhnev for an explanation. Brezhnev denied knowing anything about it, but promised to recall Zimyanin and have him punished. He was indeed recalled, but the 'punishment' turned out to be promotion to Chief Editor of *Pravda* and membership of the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

'Some punishment!' I commented to the President. 'If anyone's been slapped in the face by Brezhnev, you have.'

There were, as Novotny had predicted, widespread and adverse reactions to Khrushchev's dismissal. I remember one bitter remark

which circulated amongst colleagues in the Soviet armed forces: "Stalin was condemned as a murderer; Khrushchev has been thrown out as a naive blabbermouth and an anti-Marxist who would destroy collective leadership. What will they tell us about Brezhnev when his time comes?"

The dreaded General Yepishev told us in the spring of 1967 that the Politburo had ruled that there should be no more criticism of former leaders, because the manner in which de-Stalinization and Khrushchev's dismissal had been handled had created a lack of trust in the Party. In confidence he told us that the main objective of his Political Administration in 1967 must be to restore the Army's confidence in the Party leadership.

History will judge Khrushchev's period of leadership. But I know from my own travels in the U.S.S.R. what a depth of gratitude the Soviet people feel towards him for de-Stalinization and the end of the Terror. On the other side of the coin, de-Stalinization touched wells of shame in the Soviet psyche which rebounded adversely on Khrushchev. For him, de-Stalinization was not just a moral crusade, and a lever for power, though he did use it that way. It was intended to jerk Communism out of its defensive and stagnant attitudes, in order to enable the Soviet Union to take a new initiative in its dealings with the West. But his actions did temper the brutal quality of the political struggle in Russia and the satellites. It is worth remembering that if he had failed in his struggle for power in 1953 he would have faced a firing squad, like Beria. That the anti-Party group - and Khrushchev himself- suffered no more than political eclipse is one of his legacies, from which Brezhnev also could benefit if he is ousted.

I must point out, too, that the very existence of dissenters in the U.S.S.R. today, even if they are only a tiny elite, is a measure of the relaxation first introduced by Khrushchev; it was unthinkable under Stalin, and would have remained unthinkable under any other of his possible successors.

Khrushchev could be cold blooded and ruthless. He personally ordered the seizure - in each case by a despicable trick - of the Hungarian leaders Imre Nagy and Pal Maleter in 1956 and their subsequent execution. He did little actually to reduce the pervasive influence of the K.G.B., although he tried to bring it more closely under his control, and dealt personally with excesses that came to

his attention. Perhaps, under Khrushchev, the K.G.B. impinged on the lives of fewer people; but the oilier institutional controls which exist under the tightly organized, monolithic system of Communism more than counter-balanced any relaxation in the security organs.

One of Khrushchev's principal ambitions was to make the Party more effective by turning it into a professional managerial elite. He insisted that it was not enough for the Party cadres to be skilled ideologists, they must be trained to supervise the enterprises they were responsible for.

He was very keen on delegating more power to the republics; he wanted their people to believe, as far as the system allowed, that their destiny was in their own hands. During my visit to Armenia in 1963, the local Party First Secretary told me delightedly that they were about to launch a hydro-electric project with Turkey on their common frontier. When they had gone to Moscow to get central Government approval, formerly a lengthy business, Khrushchev had agreed at once, in two words: *'Zdelajte eto'* (get on with it).

Khrushchev's policy of peaceful co-existence, for which his opponents labelled him anti-Marxist, arose from his belief that ideology would only be decisive in the struggle with the West when the Communist system had achieved equality in the economic field. He was always telling us that when people are hungry, propaganda means nothing. Peaceful co-existence, he hoped, would bring an accommodation with the West whereby the Soviet Union could obtain the technological and trade benefits necessary for her to reach economic parity; of course, he was wildly optimistic in thinking the process would take a mere fifteen years. He was also much too sanguine about the readiness of the Western Europeans to come to terms with him at America's expense.

For all his good intentions, Khrushchev's personal style of direction eventually alienated the rest of the leadership. He committed the astonishing blunder of antagonizing all three pillars of the Communist system. His unorthodox ideas combined with his personal flamboyance and extravagant gestures to horrify the dim, dull men who occupied the seats of power; but the Soviet people loved him, as did many in the satellites, including myself.

He could speak for hours without notes and would shatter his opponents with his rough peasant humour. But when he made mistakes, such as the 'Virgin Lands' misadventure, they were on a

monumental scale, and there was no one to share the odium. His final, and fatal, illusion was to assume that his protege Brezhnev-would never betray him, and that with his own brother-in-law, Grechko, in charge of the Army he was invulnerable.

My parents working on a collective farm

With enlisted men of the 51st Engineering Brigade in Litomerice. A propaganda photograph taken during a political meeting.

With a Lao military delegation in Czechoslovakia. Left to right: Myself, Oldrich Chernik, unknown, the Commander of the Neutral-ist forces in Laos General Kong-le, and the Commander of the Pathet Lao forces General Sin Ka-po

A meeting of the Collegium of the Minister of Defence and a Bulgarian delegation in 1963. Left to Right: Ludvik Svoboda,
Miroslav Smoldas, Vaclav Prchlik, the Minister of Defence Bohumir Lomsky,
Aleksandr Kuschev, Otakar Rytir, Vladimir
Janko, and myself

With a Czech military delegation in Bulgaria, 1963. The Bulgarian Minister of Defence, Dzurov, is far left, and beside him is Bohumir Lomsky. I am far right.

May Day parade in Litomerice, 1967. I am making a speech to 45,000 people as Member of the Presidium of Parliament

Joseph Smrkovsky with his dog Rap in Prague

Celebrating the birthday of the President's son Antonin Novotny (far right) in the wine cellars of a state farm in Litomerice. I am second from left

With my grandson Minek during the building of my summer house in the West

May 1968.
A triumphant Dubcek (centre right) with President Ludvik Svoboda beside him in Prague

March 1971.
Dubcek stands unrecognized in Bratislava waiting for a bus to work

9

Brezhnev

When Brezhnev smiles he looks as if he wants to bite you. This is his Party smile, and I don't think anybody outside his family has seen him give any other. Soon after his rise to power, one of our Soviet advisers described him to me as 'a typical middle-grade cadre', and many in the Soviet Union who knew him used to say frankly that he was a mediocre man, not fit for the highest position. Certainly he lacks the imagination and the common touch of Khrushchev. He has taken great care to surround himself with the trappings of the Party apparatus, though his personal power has become more naked recently.

He was more convivial in the days before his elevation to Party First Secretary. I have already mentioned his affair with the wife of Rudolph Barak, our Minister of the Interior, who was arrested for embezzlement. Barak had condoned the relationship because he thought it would help his political career, but even Brezhnev, as Khrushchev's Deputy, was unable to arrange a release. Brezhnev is very fond of vodka, and of Pilsen beer, which we used to send him direct to Moscow. He also loves Western clothes, though he takes care to preserve on public occasions the drab appearance considered appropriate for Communist political leaders. Whenever he came to Prague, the Director of our Politburo shop - where the elite could buy luxuries unavailable to lesser men - would have to fly to Italy and West Germany before his arrival, to lay in a special stock for him. Brezhnev always demanded shirts and socks; if he requested anything else, my friend the Director had to fly *immediately* to Germany or Italy and bring it back for him.

Brezhnev does not believe, as Khrushchev did, in the promotion of technocrats within the Party. He insists that the role of the Party cadres must be to form the ideological vanguard. The 'realistic' leadership which he proclaimed in his opening speech to the 25th Party Congress in February 1976 is based essentially on the premise that the ideological struggle with Capitalism is paramount. The Soviet Union must take all it can from the West, but it must secure its frontiers against the infiltration of bourgeois ideology. There must be no internal liberalization, and no concessions to 'personal or family socialism' — i.e. to those who work for higher living standards for themselves rather than for the progress of Communism. Brezhnev-expects 'educated Marxists' to understand why it is necessary to make temporary sacrifices to build up the military power of the Soviet bloc. He is the most chauvinist and bigoted Russian nationalist I have ever met.

Peaceful co-existence or detente does not, in Brezhnev's view, mean a relaxation of vigilance — rather the reverse. It requires the Soviet Union to achieve military supremacy over its opponents. Brezhnev has adopted one of Stalin's slogans: 'The more successful Communism is, the stronger the Soviet camp must become.'

The Soviet leader is careful, even aggressive, in protecting Eastern Europe from disruptive Western influences. Khrushchev's statement after Hungary that leaders in Eastern Europe had sufficient experience and were strong enough not to need Soviet protection and advice was always viewed by the Soviet Party with the deepest mistrust, and of course it was totally discredited by events in Prague. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the doctrine of 'limited sovereignty' were inspired by Brezhnev's alarm over the demoralizing effect of detente on his allies. The Soviet Party believed Khrushchev allowed power over the satellites to slip through his fingers; Brezhnev is determined to keep a much tighter rein.

Brezhnev believes that the only way for Communism to triumph is by the destruction of Capitalism. He relies on superpower diplomacy and subversion, backed by overwhelming military power, to give the Soviet Union and its allies the greatest flexibility in its relations with the Capitalists. Detente offers Brezhnev the means of carving up the Western powers piece by piece. Europe is the keystone of this policy, but it has world-wide ramifications as well. The stages involved in

this policy and the means to be adopted for its implementation were embodied in what became known to all of us as the Soviet Long-Term Strategic Plan.

10

The Strategic Plan

In February 1981, the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union took place in a world greatly changed from that which existed when I left Prague in 1968. It was a world more hostile to the Soviet Union and one which had defied the confident predictions for the extension of Soviet power that I had studied in the pages of the Strategic Plan. Nevertheless, the speeches and pronouncements of the Soviet leadership at this Congress showed that Soviet policy and methods had not changed from the broad guidelines which form the framework for the detailed sections of the Plan. Of greatest importance was the affirmation of the pre-eminence of the role of military force and the armed services in the Soviet 'struggle for peace and Socialism'. The intervention of the Soviet surrogates, the Cubans, in Angola and Ethiopia, and their increasing involvement in Central America; the Soviet funding of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia; and, towering above all, the blatant seizure of Afghanistan and continuing suppression of the Afghan tribes by the Red Army itself should indicate, even to an untutored observer, that Soviet readiness to employ direct military force to achieve its goals is as strong as ever.

The 26th Congress both confirmed this policy and provided a vivid illustration of the continuing major role of military might in the implementation of Soviet policy. At first the omission from the Congress of a speech by the Soviet Minister of Defence, Ustinov, caused speculation that the role of the military was under review. But his speech was replaced by an event of greater significance. Instead of the usual contingents of Young Pioneers presenting flowers to the leadership, a large force of troops, comprising all

branches of the Soviet military force, marched in formation to the Congress and lined the aisles alongside the delegates, while a Major-General F.M. Kuzmin read out 'an oath of loyalty to the Party and the people' and assured the delegates that 'the soldiers stand ready to protect Socialism and the struggle for peace'. In addition to this extraordinary event, two articles were published in *Pravda*, one before the Congress, attributed to the Minister of Defence, and one after, attributed to the Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Army, Marshal Ogarkov. In the first, Ustinov said that the Red Army was ready to fulfil their 'patriotic and *international* duty"; in the second, the role of the Soviet armed forces was defined as the protection of Socialism and the implementation of the historical duty of the U.S.S.R. to develop Socialism everywhere in the world. Lastly, in its report to the Congress, the Central Committee spoke of the Warsaw Pact and stated that 'it has at its disposal everything necessary reliably to defend the Socialist gains of the people and we will do everything to ensure that this will be so in the future'.

In the years since I left Czechoslovakia the Strategic Plan will of course have changed in detail because each section of the Plan is subject to constant revision to ensure that it takes into account new factors introduced by changes in the world's political forces and unforeseen advances in Western technology which necessitate Soviet arms control initiatives. It had always been made clear that the Plan's objectives were firm but the means and methods of achieving them were flexible. This flexibility often serves to confound Western political analysts, who tend to confuse a change in tactics with a profound change in Soviet thinking. An example of this was the process of 'de-Stalinization' carried out by Khruschev which caused observers in the West to think that the leadership had abandoned Stalin's objectives; in fact, they had only dropped his methods.

One of the basic problems of the West is its frequent failure to recognize the existence of any Soviet 'grand design' at all. Those rejecting this concept unwittingly serve Soviet efforts to conceal their objectives and further complicate the process of determining such objectives. While many Western political analysts scoffat the idea of a coherent Soviet strategy, Brezhnev has said that 'the liquidation of colonial empires was effectively completed in the seventies. The sphere of Imperialist domination in the world has narrowed.'

However, not all major Soviet goals have been achieved. They

have been remarkably unsuccessful in the Middle East, which the Soviets thought they would control by 1982. Their first major reverse occurred when Egypt refused to be dictated to by the U.S.S.R. and turned to the U.S. for economic and military assistance. Subsequently the exclusion of the U.S.S.R. from the development of negotiations towards a Middle East peace settlement has been a major obstacle to the achievement of the Plan's objectives in that area. Equally, the failure of the Soviet-backed Tudeh Party in Iran to establish a dominating position in Government or otherwise control the development of the Iranian revolution will have caused the Soviet planners serious concern. This, combined with the instability caused by the Iraq-Iran war and the diminution of Soviet influence in Baghdad, represents a serious setback to the Plan's goals.

The major obstacle, however, to Soviet realization of strategic objectives is the People's Republic of China. Clear indications of Soviet attempts to encircle China are provided by the massive Soviet support (now $3 million *per day)* for the establishment of Ho Chi-minh's dream of a Communist Indo-Chinese Republic under the control of Vietnam. Further evidence was provided by the special attention given to this subject by Brezhnev at the 26th Party Congress. However, Soviet attempts to isolate China from the remainder of the Third World have not been successful, nor have they managed to prevent Western economic and technological assistance to China. More importantly, the great hope of a change in Chinese policy towards the U.S.S.R. after the death of Mao has proved empty.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the U.S.S.R. has been unable to achieve full integration into the Soviet system of the other nations of the Warsaw Pact. In fact, control of its satellites has proved increasingly difficult, and the present Polish situation demonstrates that the objectives of the Plan continue to face major obstacles in the area most vital to the U.S.S.R.

These failures, which are temporary setbacks, are often seen in the West as the obvious and natural result of Soviet economic and political weakness. That is a very dangerous view, and one which ignores the calculating and persevering nature of Soviet decision-makers. As Brezhnev stated at the 26th Party Congress, 'Communists have always boldly met the attacks of the adversary and won. That is how it was and how it will be, and let no one have any doubt about our

common determination to secure our interests and to defend the Socialist gains of the people.'

Brezhnev's statement is Soviet strategy in a nutshell. Marxist-Leninist ideology claims that the course of history is inevitable, and as Brezhnev's statement implies, the Russians believe the same of 'socialist gains'. What is already Socialist will be defended; what is not yet Socialist is the objective.

Nevertheless, on occasion the Soviets do make tactical modifications. For example, to calm the furore aroused by the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, overt Soviet military activity was curtailed, and remained so until the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. In addition, rhetoric about 'Socialist unity' was reduced from 1968 until 1974. But the objectives of the Plan were not abandoned and increasing numbers of Soviet surrogates, notably Cubans, were employed to exploit what opportunities occurred for furthering the attainment of the goals.

Similarly, after three years of Afghanistan occupation, during which time world attention has turned to other matters, Brezhnev has begun to talk of a new offensive, a revitalization of the policy of 'peaceful co-existence'. Such rhetoric should be assessed in the light of the Strategic Plan's aim of 'global peace' following final Soviet victory, as should Brezhnev's talk of 'universal peace' at the 26th Party Congress. It supports Khrushchev's remark that there can be no permanent peace as long as Capitalism exists.

While the main target of the Strategic Plan is the United States, a direct attack against it would invite grave damage to the Soviet Union. Therefore, to avoid direct conflict with the U.S., the Plan calls for the isolation of the 'main enemy' by the 'Finlandization' of Europe; reduction of Western political and economic access to the Third World by establishing pro-Soviet regimes wherever and whenever possible; and insurgency in areas of importance to the U.S., such as Central America.

The Soviet Strategic Plan for the establishment of their 'Socialism' worldwide does, without doubt, exist and, however flexible and pragmatic Soviet policy appears, it is essentially directed towards the achievements of the Plan's objectives - objectives which have been, are and will remain utterly inimical to and subversive of the freedoms enjoyed by the states of the Western world.

The satellite countries first heard of the Plan in the mid-1960s. They were restive over the lack of long-term guidance from Moscow, which controlled the central planning machinery but failed to give us any indications of its ultimate objectives. The result was economic chaos in Eastern Europe. We would work out our five-year plans, and the Russians would regularly ignore them. We never knew from one day to the next what requirements they would impose on us, or what projects would be cancelled. The chaos was worst in the field of arms procurement. The Czech armed forces, for instance, were subject to constant reorganization and to continual pressure from the Soviet Union to bring in new Russian equipment. The cost to our defence budget and consequent drain on our economy was enormous. This perpetual uncertainty fed inflation, and had political consequences as well, for it underlined our colonial status and made it impossible for the various satellite Communist Parties to explain with any conviction the twists and turns of policy forced upon them. Our leaders, moreover, had strong suspicions that our masters in the Kremlin had drawn up strategic objectives which they were concealing from the other Warsaw Pact regimes.

The matter came to a head in January 1965, at the Political Consultative meeting of the Pact. After representations from Novotny, Kadar, and Gomulka, the Soviet leaders agreed in principle to draw up a long-term strategic plan.

The blueprint for this plan was first debated at the Warsaw Pact meeting in Moscow in October 1966. The Soviet delegation, led by Brezhnev, proposed that the countries of the Pact should together draw up a Strategic Plan giving their long-term domestic and foreign objectives. This plan would be complementary to the existing five-year plans, which would become tactical documents specifying the targets to be reached at each stage of the Strategic Plan. Its full title was 'The Long-Term Strategic Plan for the Next Ten to Fifteen Years and the Years After'. The existing five-year plans, we all agreed, had proved unrealistic and quite inadequate. Their shortcomings were evident to Western observers, because their economic and political goals were always published. The sections dealing with military matters, intelligence, and foreign policy were, of course, secret.

The Warsaw Pact delegations all approved the Soviet proposal, and from February 1967 each Party leadership received regular

Soviet directives detailing its country's role in the overall Plan. The target date for completing the Plan was September 1968. In Czechoslovakia, supreme responsibility for it devolved on Novotny's deputy, Jiri Hendrych. Vladimir Koucky supervised the foreign affairs section, and Joseph Gomulka (not to be confused with the Polish leader) took charge of the military plan. Experts were co-opted from outside to carry out the specialized work. The key department was Gomulka's Administrative Department of the Central Committee, which directed the armed forces, and the Ministries of the Interior and Justice. I was a member of this Department and had unlimited access to the Plan.

Its domestic economic aspects are interesting only for the light they shed on the Soviet attitude to peaceful co-existence. But it is worth noting that the final objective was to achieve near self-sufficiency in the East European countries by the late 1980s. It was accepted that the Soviet Union would not outstrip the United States in all areas of the economy by that time, but the Plan gave priority to closing the scientific and technological gap and even overtaking the U.S.A. in applied military technology. The emphasis in the domestic plan on accelerating the rate of technological and industrial advance was justified, not in terms of improving living standards, but solely by the need to achieve a revolution in military science. Indeed, the General Staffs were given the right to supervise civilian research programmes to ensure a proper balance between civilian and military projects.

In agriculture, the assumption was that by 1985 the Pact would have to import grain only for cattle feed and reserves; in other respects it would be self-sufficient. Industrially, we were to give priority to producing goods which could earn foreign exchange, penetrate Capitalist markets, even at low profit levels, and displace Western products in the markets of the Third World, thus bringing us economic and political influence. We believed that a lessening of tension with the Capitalist world would help us to achieve these ends, and moreover enable us to buy or steal the advanced machinery and technology we needed.

The principal strand connecting the domestic and foreign sectors of the Strategic Plan was the militarization of society. The armed forces were to be the guardians of 'democratic socialism' both at home and abroad. They were charged with the destruction of such

'petty bourgeois illusions of liberalism' as remained in Eastern Europe, which might weaken the solidarity of the Pact. They must also maintain ideological orthodoxy and liquidate the 'nationalities problem' both inside the Soviet Union and throughout the alliance. Brezhnev actually told us that when the era of 'Global Democratic Peace' arrived, there would be no need of national boundaries. A Soviet Army would still be required, however, because some bourgeois tendencies would linger on in the former Capitalist countries to threaten the unity of 'our Socialist family'. In the meantime, there was little confidence in the East European peoples' loyalty to Communism; contingency plans existed for the reinforcement of all main cities on the assumption that in the early days of any conflict with the West there would be large uprisings.

The foreign policy sector of the Plan defined the main foreign political goals of the Pact countries and specified the roles to be played in their achievement by diplomacy, foreign trade, military force, espionage, and subversion. There was also mention of cultural activities, propaganda, tourism, sport, and overt commerce. The foreign section was divided into four phases which forecast future developments on the basis of current and projected operations, and set approximate dates for completing each phase.

Phase One, 'The Period of Preparation for Peaceful Co-existence', was retrospective and covered the time from the 20th Party Congress of 1956 to the 21st Congress in 1959. Phase Two, 'The Peaceful Co-existence Struggle' (note the word 'struggle'), was expected to last from 1960 to 1972, the year after the 24th Party Congress. Phase Three was 'The Period of Dynamic Social Change' leading to Phase Four, 'The Era of Global Democratic Peace', which it was hoped would dawn in 1995.

According to Soviet estimates, the post-war isolation of the Warsaw Pact resulting from Stalin's policies had been modified during Phase One. Khrushchev's de-Stalinization policy had opened a gateway to the West; his achievement had been to persuade the West that the Pact was prepared to replace military rivalry by economic competition.

In Phase Two the main strategic objectives were to promote disunity in the West and accelerate the social fragmentation of the Capitalist countries. In Europe, we must try to exaggerate fears of a renascent Germany and play upon French nationalism in order to

detach France from N.A.T.O. We planned to use our penetration of the European Social Democratic Parties to weaken their ties with the United States and strengthen their will for an accommodation with the Warsaw Pact. By manipulating the trade union movement and student organizations we proposed to exacerbate existing causes of social and industrial unrest and create new areas of confrontation. We also intended to exploit anti-Americanism in Europe in order to weaken America's commitment to its defence. Inside the United States we would encourage isolationism and stir up internal disorder, focusing the attacks of the radical movement over there on the military and industrial establishments as barriers to peace. Here we received an unexpected bonus from the Vietnam war.

In the Third World, our aims were to destroy 'colonialism', weaken the economies of the old colonial powers and win new allies in the effort to discredit the 'Imperialist powers', led of course by the United States. No one can deny our success in these objectives, helped by our exploitation of the new balance of votes in the United Nations.

In the Middle East we were to encourage Arab nationalism, urge the nationalization of oil, and work for the overthrow of Arab monarchies and their replacement by 'progressive' governments. From about 1977, according to our forecasts in the Plan, the new Middle East regimes would respond to our strategy and, through their oil, give us the ability to deliver a paralyzing blow to Capitalism.

In Phase Two, also, we considered it essential to increase the fire power of the Pact by applying the latest scientific and technical advances to the modernization of our armed forces, and thus offset any arms limitation agreements we might find it advantageous to conclude. We must also build up our troop strength on the Chinese border and try to establish a pro-Soviet opposition movement inside China. We would give support to anti-Chinese groups in the bordering countries, with the ultimate objective of surrounding China with a *cordon sanitaire* of hostile nations.

The main strategic purpose of Phase Three, 'The Period of Dynamic Social Change', was, in the words of the Soviet directive, 'to smash the hope of false democracy' and bring about the total demoralization of the West. Our relationship with the United States would be the vital element in this phase. By fostering belief in our policy of friendship and co-operation with America, we planned to

receive the greatest possible economic and technological help from the West, and at the same time convince the Capitalist countries that they had no need of military alliances. The erosion of N.A.T.O. begun in Phase Two would be completed by the withdrawal of the United States from its commitment to the defence of Europe, and by European hostility to military expenditure, generated by economic recession and fanned by the efforts of the 'progressive' movements. To this end we envisaged that it might be necessary to dissolve the Warsaw Pact, in which event we had already prepared a web of bilateral defence arrangements, to be supervised by secret committees of Comecon.

The Soviet view was that during Phase Three Capitalism would suffer an economic crisis that would bring Europe to its knees and stimulate the influence of 'progressive' forces in European governments. Our planners believed we could discount the possibility of a world war in this phase because the U.S.A. would have withdrawn its commitment to help its former allies. We could therefore foment local or regional wars in Europe in support of progressive movements - if it should be necessary. Once America had abandoned the defence of Europe, we should apply ourselves to convincing the Europeans that the U.S. was pursuing a self-interested policy and even conspiring actively against them; thus we would increase America's isolation.

Under the Plan, we Czechs were to concentrate our efforts on those countries with which we had enjoyed close ties before the Second World War. We were to penetrate the Social Democrats in Germany, Austria, Belgium, and Scandinavia, and we launched disinformation operations, especially in France. We were to continue enlisting and training recruits from Latin America and the British Commonwealth to overthrow their Governments; at one time we trained Ethiopians - with outstanding success, it now appears. In the Middle East we had special responsibility for penetration and espionage in Syria, Kuwait, Iraq and Algeria. It was also our job to ensure that in the event of war the oil pipelines in those countries were destroyed.

The fourth and final phase of the Plan looked forward to the dawn of 'Global Democratic Peace'. At the start of Phase Four the U.S. would be isolated from both Europe and the developing countries. We could therefore undermine it by the use of external economic

weapons, and so create the social and economic conditions for progressive forces to emerge inside the country. In this Phase, the Plan envisaged a resurgence of the arms race, leading to the eventual military superiority of the Warsaw Pact, which the United States would accept.

Obviously the timing of these various phases has changed with events unforeseen in 1967. For example, the 'Prague Spring' and subsequent crisis of 1968 will have put back the Plan a good year, probably more. Moreover, no one foresaw that economic recession in the West would arrive so early, as a result of the rocketing cost of oil after the Yom Kippur War. There is a powerful lobby in the Soviet Union which is reluctant to lose this opportunity. But if the Kremlin has so far refrained from publicly advocating general strikes and a policy of sharp confrontation by Western Communist Parties against their governments, its attitude does not indicate any deep desire to make detente irreversible; it indicates that the Soviet leadership has evidently decided that the time is not yet ripe for the progressive movement to succeed in Europe. The Kremlin is anxious, paradoxically, that Capitalism should recover from its present sickness, in order to provide the Warsaw Pact with needed economic benefits. Whatever temporary accommodations the Soviet leaders are prepared to make, their long-term objectives remain constant. In Khrushchev's words, 'We will bury you.'

As First Secretary of the Party in the Ministry of Defence I was a member of the Administrative Department, through which passed all the major Soviet directives, and so I was able to monitor the progress of the Plan. My responsibility was to instruct the military officers selected to work on the Plan in the political aspects of the main strategic objectives, and also to ensure that the tactical aims followed Party guidelines and priorities.

The lesser Ministries were not allowed to scrutinize translations of the Soviet strategic documents. They simply received a briefing on those parts that applied to them. They drew up plans covering their contribution to the overall effort and sent them to the Ministries of Defence and the Interior. They were the only Ministries outside the Party apparatus to receive the plans, and they gave a very good idea of the overall objectives of the Warsaw Pact.

As a result of the burgeoning cost of defence and the inflationary pressure on the Czech economy, we established study groups within the armed forces to analyze their cost effectiveness. The studies began early in 1965 and finished two years later. Their findings surprised no *one* in our Ministry. They concluded that our standing army was far too large for our economy to support, and that we had too many units for the number of men available. This resulted in the recruitment of soldiers who would have been unfit to serve in any other army. When I visited one front-line tank division, I found that 247 of the men were unfit for battle. One conscript, for example, could not bend his left arm, and another had only one kidney.

Our analysts also worked out that in mechanization, supply, and servicing we were fifteen years behind the West. The military school system was inefficient and expensive, and the mobilization plan, which was continually pulling reservists out of factories to keep them up to date on military techniques, was highly disruptive.

From these findings emerged a number of bold proposals, based on the fundamental premise that N.A.T.O. was not an aggressive alliance and that it was inconceivable that the West would attack the Warsaw Pact in the next fifteen to twenty years. One proposal was that 20 per cent of our front line should be composed of reservists, another that we should reduce our Air Force by one tactical division, and a third that we should try to prolong the service life of our weapons and equipment. We also suggested a rationalization of military supply to avoid wasteful duplication. We were tired of producing weapons which the Russians rejected in favour of their own, often inferior, designs.

In June 1967, after prolonged discussion, a draft of these proposals went to the Military Committee of the Ministry of Defence for endorsement. The Committee gave instructions that the Soviet leaders should be asked for their views. I was a member of the delegation, led by General Otakar Rytir, our Chief of Staff, which visited Moscow in October 1967.

Marshal Zhakarov, Chief of Staff of the Red Army, opened the discussion and proceeded to reject our ideas point by point. The atmosphere in the room was thick with hostility. I broke out in a cold sweat when he announced that General Yepishev would deal with our 'utterly inexplicable' belief that the West would not attack the Warsaw Pact.

There was absolute silence as the sinister and dreaded figure of this former deputy chief of the K.G.B. leant forward on his elbows and looked us over with his cold snake-like eyes.

'It would be interesting to discover,' he began, in his usual soft, conspiratorial tone, 'who is the father of this anti-Marxist idea.' General Prchlik, our Chief of Main Political Administration, turned white. No one would meet Yepishev's gaze.

'Why,' he asked us, 'do you want to destroy the ideological achievements of the past thirty years? Why do you think the Party has invested so much effort in alerting the people to the danger of Imperialist aggression? How do you propose to explain to your people the need to be vigilant, to have a strong military capability, if you assert that the West is no longer aggressive? Your proposal would destroy the whole basis of the Party's propaganda.

'I strongly advise you,' he concluded ominously, 'to launch an investigation into the origin of this idea. It was created either out of ignorance or under the influence of bourgeois ideology.'

There followed another two hours' discussion before the meeting ended. We went back to Prague with our tails between our legs. The Russians accepted only the most insignificant items in our proposals, and left us to find other means of alleviating the burden of national defence.

When my friends and I studied the Strategic Plan our initial reactions were identical: we considered it quite unrealistic, especially in its timing, which we thought wildly optimistic. Some of us, including myself, even hoped that over the period of its completion the U.S.S.R. itself might change, and with it the whole of the Plan. If it did not, the prospect was most depressing because we gained the impression from the Plan that the Soviet Union would try to reduce the satellite *states*, including Czechoslovakia, to Soviet republics; in other words, we would form part of a great Soviet Union.

But I became even more pessimistic after I defected and saw the West's own policies. I could find no unity, no consistent objective or strategy among Western countries. It is not possible to fight the Soviet system and strategy with small tactical steps. For the first time I began to believe that the Soviet Union would be able to achieve her goals — something I had not believed in Czechoslovakia.

More recently, however, I have come to believe that the West has a chance. The Kremlin's optimism during the years between 1960

and 1970 was far from realistic. Most of the leaders in the Third World do not favour Communism. The Socialism that exists in Asia and Africa is, in most cases, a long way from Marxist Communism. And so I am a little more optimistic now, especially after the Soviet failure in Egypt, which far outweighs their successes in Angola and Ethiopia.

What continues to bother me is the West's lack of unity and coherent strategy, which has certainly not improved in the last few years. Moreover, it is not enough simply to have plans for opposing, or even destroying, Communism; something better must be offered in its place. What is the West's programme? What is its strategy? So far I have heard nothing coherent about this from Western politicians. Of course the problem for a democratic system is how to establish any consistent strategy or policy, when every four or five years governments change.

Another cause for concern is that many people in the West, including some of its leaders, do not understand the real significance of detente to the Soviet Union. When, along with other Czech leaders, I met Brezhnev in Moscow in 1966, we discussed detente, and these were his words: 'Some Left extremists misunderstand detente. They think we are surrendering to the Capitalists. They don't understand that it gives us a free hand - a free hand to almost all the Communist movements in the world, and this is most important.'

Detente also helps the U.S.S.R. to build up a strong economy, and with it stronger military forces. It is politically important, too, because it allows the Soviet leaders to improve, at least marginally, the living standards of their people, and exercise greater economic control over the countries of Eastern Europe. Finally, the U.S.S.R. has severe difficulties in giving aid to the developing countries, and so the more economic benefits the Soviet Union can derive from the West, the more it can influence the Third World.

The strongest supporters of the Soviet Strategic Plan were the East Germans. I heard Walter Ulbricht, on vacation in Karlovy Vary, speak strongly in favour of it and of the increases in the military budget. He imagined that if all Europe were occupied, he would control a reunited Germany. This was nonsense. He did not realize what all of us knew, that the Russians would never tolerate a united Germany, even a Communist one, because they were still afraid of a vast, strong German state.

The Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov was another wholehearted supporter of the Plan, while the Soviet military were naturally all in favour. I have often been asked what Dubcek thought of the Plan, but I am not sure if he even knew about it. He was not then a member of the Military Committee of the Central Committee, where we used to discuss it. In any case, at the time the Plan was introduced, Dubcek, as a protege of Brezhnev, never deviated from the Soviet line.

11

West Germany: The Central Front

In the event of war, our Czech armed forces would have to tackle the West German Army - our principal adversary on the Central Front. The Czech armies were to cross the frontier within thirty minutes of the outbreak of hostilities and reach the Rhine in three days. There they would join Soviet and East German troops as a prelude to the invasion of France, which the Red Army itself would spearhead.

Our war plan envisaged that the Czech and East German armies would arrive at the French border so depleted - we estimated that the average life of a platoon commander on the battlefield would be a mere two hours - that only token Czech and German contingents would accompany the Red Army on its drive to Paris. This Soviet plan suggests - indeed it may well derive from — the tactics of Genghis Khan's Mongols in their victorious sweeps across Asia and much of Europe. They used soldiers from their subject peoples to launch their assaults and take the heaviest casualties; then the elite Mongol troops would close in and finish off the enemy.

West Germany featured in the Strategic Plan as the most important country in Western Europe. We regarded it as the strongest industrial power, and the Soviet analysts considered the German Army the strongest, best trained, and most highly disciplined force in N.A.T.O., with the possible exception of the U.S. contingent.

In Soviet eyes, the German Social Democratic Party would play a leading role in the international Socialist movement, although for them its disadvantage was its potential influence on the Eastern European parties. The huge tourist traffic from Germany into

Czechoslovakia was an example; with their Mercedes cars and affluent appearance they brought great danger of ideological infection. It was soon possible to buy the favours of a girl in Prague for a pair of stockings, which wrung from President Novotny the complaint that Czech girls were now cheaper than those in Hong Kong.

In Stalin's days, all Germans were 'Fascist revanchists' who had to be kept cowed by the threat of overwhelming force. Khrushchev at first continued this policy of isolating West Germany; but he said to me in 1954: 'We have two alternatives, either to combine with Britain and France to keep Germany under control, or to try and achieve the same result by working directly on the Germans. If we fail, Germany will become the strongest power in Europe. If it would help us in our task, I would make Adenauer a gold star Hero of Russia.'

The first change in Soviet policy came with the building of the Berlin Wall. When it was completed, Khrushchev summoned high-level delegations from Eastern Europe to Moscow for a Warsaw Pact meeting. Ulbricht was delighted with his wall, and made the mistake of assuming that the mobilization of the Pact meant Khrushchev was about to force a confrontation with the West in Berlin. Khrushchev slapped him down hard, saying that the Pact would not take one step further.

'What we've got to do', he said, 'is to destroy the anti-Communist platform of Adenauer's Christian Democrats.'

Khrushchev told Ulbricht to tone down his attacks on Bonn and to modify Communist Party activity in the Federal Republic. The Soviet Union concluded agreements with Adenauer, the Christian Democrat Chancellor, for the return of German prisoners-of-war, and made the first overtures towards economic co-operation. Moreover, to increase the pressure on Adenauer, Khrushchev emphasized his growing relationship with de Gaulle, and also invited the Chairman of the German Social Democratic Party to a private meeting in East Berlin.

The preamble to the Plan on Germany owed a great deal to Khrushchev's ideas. The Soviet analysts congratulated themselves that Soviet support for the 'progressive' movement in Germany, combined with a tough foreign policy, had ruled out any resurgence of Fascism in that country. They noted that even Germany's allies

were reluctant to support such right-wing politicians as Franz Josef Strauss and his collaborators. Militarism had disappeared and most Germans, especially the young, cared nothing about German reunification: 'It is no longer the main problem,' stated the Plan, 'in our political struggle with the Federal Republic.'

Two matters caused considerable satisfaction: first, despite an expanding economy, there had been no proportionate increase in the German defence budget; secondly, and even more encouraging, was the belief that all responsible German leaders were ready to accept the status quo in Eastern Europe.

The analysts concluded that the focus of German politics had shifted from Adenauer's position on the right towards the centre. Although the Communists had lost much influence and could make no impression on the working class, progressive forces now enjoyed a strong position in the Social Democratic Party. The Christian Democrats, on the other hand, seemed to be on the wane.

The Plan for Germany envisaged three phases. During the first, from 1968 to 1973, we would cultivate our relationship with the German Social Democratic Party and promote a reversal of Adenauer's Cold War policies, in response to our strategy of peaceful co-existence. The second period, lasting until the early 1980s, would see the rise of Socialism in West Germany, under pressure from the progressive movements there and throughout Europe. By phase three, N.A.T.O. would have ceased to exist, and with it the ability of the right in Germany to resist the progressive movement, aided by military pressure on Bonn from the Soviet Government.

The plans were, of course, wildly optimistic, but the Soviets were encouraged by their easy penetration of the Social Democratic Party, which was to become the main vehicle for achieving Soviet objectives in Germany. Their guidelines specifically stated that it was essential to achieve a tactical alliance with the S.D.P., even though the ultimate intention was to destroy it. Khrushchev had already laid the groundwork for this policy in his talks with the S.D.P. leadership, when he had even suggested that the Soviet Party could help the S.D.P. achieve power.

Khrushchev's plausible line was recommended to the satellite Parties, and we Czechs were urged to develop our own bilateral lines to the S.D.P. The Plan formalized this requirement. The easing of travel restrictions between Czechoslovakia and West Germany

meant we could develop contacts much more easily in the security of our own country, where we could protect from publicity our discussions with S.D.P. sympathizers.

Our broad approach, under Soviet direction, was to help the S.D.P. to gain power and hold it. We did all we could to discredit the Christian Democrats and compromise their leaders especially Franz Josef Strauss; for instance, we had excellent channels to certain prominent West German magazines, which we used for smear operations. Moreover, the Kremlin ordered the Warsaw Pact countries to co-ordinate their policies towards the S.D.P. to make it seem that we were responding to S.D.P. initiatives and thus enhance the prestige of that party. But we had to take care lest the S.D.P. be branded as pro-Communist, and so we would make periodical attacks on it. Meanwhile, we Czechs and the East Germans channelled funds to sustain its left-wing faction.

I received an interesting insight into this approach in January 1968, just before my defection, when I attended a meeting of the Collegium of our Ministry of Defence to hear a report from Vladimir Koucky, Secretary of the Central Committee. He told us that he expected the German S.D.P. to achieve power soon - as indeed it did.

'Under guidance from Moscow,' he went on, 'we've already held discussions with our contacts in the S.D.P. to reach an understanding on some important questions of foreign policy. We have received undertakings, in principle, that the S.D.P. will accept the Oder-Neisse line, recognize the German Democratic Republic, and legalize the Communist Party in West Germany.

'Our relations with the S.D.P.,' he concluded, 'should serve as a model for our efforts against all the Social Democratic Parties which, as you know, are beginning to come to power in Western Europe.'

The Soviet leaders had high hopes of the post-war generation of Germans, to whom, they believed, a 'progressive' Social Democratic Party (under Soviet influence) would appeal. But they did not think that the S.D.P. alone would be able to take West Germany far enough along the path to Socialism; and so, as well as penetrating the S.D.P., they tried to form new progressive cadres among the middle-class and the working-class trade unions. They were worried by the conservative nature of the German trade unions, which they found difficult to manipulate, and they asked us to have their political allies

in Germany devise new ways of involving the workers in management, and so fragment traditional union loyalties.

The Soviet analysts did not think the progressives would gain power without a fight with the German right wing. They expected a conservative counter-reaction in the early 1980s-in the Third Phase of the Plan - perhaps with help from para-military forces and rightist sympathizers in the Bundeswehr. In this event, however, the Kremlin intended publicly to interpret such a move as a challenge to the security of Eastern Europe, and to threaten military action. Nor was this an idle threat: the Russians were indeed ready to begin a local war with Germany to support a progressive government. As early as 1968 they had allotted specific objectives for selected Soviet units to seize in a *blitzkrieg* operation.

Ironically, there was no role in this particular exercise for the East German armed forces. The Soviet Union had no intention of encouraging anything that might lead to the unification of Germany, which was the last thing they wanted.

12

The Neutrals: Austria, Switzerland, and Scandinavia

Khrushchev's decision to withdraw Russian occupation forces from Austria in 1955 and conclude a treaty accepting Austrian neutrality met with strong opposition from the Soviet Marshals. Khrushchev intended it as a gesture to the German Federal Chancellor, Adenauer, who he hoped would agree to the neutralization of Germany in return for the unification of the East and West zones.

Khrushchev's leading critic was Marshal Zhukov, formerly his strongest supporter. Zhukov felt that Khrushchev was playing into the hands of anti-Socialists in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. The outbreak of the Hungarian revolution in October 1956 seemed to support Zhukov's arguments, and his immediate response was to demand the reoccupation of Austria to seal off the Hungarian infection. Khrushchev refused, for fear of endangering his new peaceful co-existence policy. Zhukov's opposition contributed to his removal from the position of Minister of Defence in November 1957, and so, eventually, to Khrushchev's own downfall.

Khrushchev himself believed that the extensive network of Soviet agents that would remain in Austria would achieve the Soviet purpose there without military intervention. Nevertheless, the Czech and Soviet intelligence services prepared 'proof that the Austrians were intervening in Hungary, in case reoccupation became desirable. As General Yepishev told me categorically in

Moscow in March 1967, 'The Soviet Union will decide whether or not Austria can remain neutral. Not the Austrian Government.'

The Russians would have liked to 'Finlandize' Austria in 1955, but the political climate was against them. The Communist Party could make little headway against innate Austrian conservatism, the influence of emigres, and the strength of the Social Democratic Party among the working classes and trade unions. But the Soviet leaders still considered they had the right to 'protect' Austria's neutrality. They particularly hated Bruno Kreisky, the Austrian Chancellor, because of his right-wing leadership of the Social Democrats and his influence in the international Socialist movement. The Soviets never let slip an opportunity to penetrate his party and make trouble for him.

The Strategic Plan admitted there was little hope of bringing a progressive party to power by Parliamentary means. If they could achieve power by a coup, the Warsaw Pact should be ready to support their attempt with military force. In the meantime, we would monitor and influence domestic developments.

The Plan gave a number of options for military intervention in Austria, of which two important examples can be given. The first envisaged that on Marshal Tito's death, or during the months of uncertainty immediately preceding it, the Red Army would invade Yugoslavia in support of pro-Soviet factions. The K.G.B., with help from other satellite intelligence services, would fabricate evidence that forces of the extreme right-wing emigre organization Ustachi had invaded Yugoslavia. The Kremlin would insist that Austria had violated her neutrality and treaty commitments by allowing her territory to be used as a base for Fascists intending to start a counterrevolution in Belgrade. The Soviet Union would therefore have no alternative but to go to the help of the Yugoslav Communists. Under the codeword Polarka, military operations would start with the occupation of western and southern Austria by the Czech and Hungarian armies. Their object would be to safeguard the entry into Yugoslavia of 400,000 Soviet troops stationed in the Transcarpathian military district. These would drive through Austria and take Yugoslavia in a pincer movement from the northeast and north-west. The Austrian frontier would be sealed to prevent reinforcements reaching the Yugoslavs across it. As Czechs and Hungarians would be the first to violate Austrian neutrality, the risk of confrontation between the superpowers would be reduced,

though the Soviet leaders did not believe that the West would go to Austria's help.

The second plan provided for the occupation of Austria as a prelude to the outbreak of conventional war in Western Europe - to forestall a similar movement by the West. This would be a fundamental part of Operation Donaj, the codeword for a general onslaught on Europe by the Warsaw Pact. Marshal Yakubovsky told us that the Russians had more than 4,000 collaborators in Austria who would help us round up undesirable civilians once the country was occupied. The K.G.B. would take over executive power under the protection of the Warsaw Pact armies.

Both options assumed that most of the Austrian forces could be captured in their barracks.

Under the Strategic Plan there was no intention of respecting the neutrality of Switzerland. Despite its affirmations of non-alignment, we included its Army in our count of N.A.T.O. forces. We considered Switzerland a bourgeois country and a fundamental part of the Capitalist system. The Plan stated that there was no chance of establishing Socialism there by peaceful means. Even the working class was 'aristocratic', in the sense that it was dominated by skilled craftsmen who were even less promising material for the progressive movement than the middle class. However, until 1963 our military operational plans had recognized its neutrality, and that of Austria and Sweden. Then Marshal Malinovsky told us that this was a 'reactionary position'. 'In the forthcoming struggle between Capitalism and the proletariat,' he said, 'no one can be neutral. It would be a betrayal of the working class for any commander to respect Capitalist neutrality.'

On the outbreak of a world war, the Plan stated, Soviet parachute troops would assist our armoured ground forces in the occupation of Switzerland. By Day 3, our troops would hold all main centres of Government, industry, and population, and the military strongpoints. In the event of a local war in Germany, we would occupy Switzerland to prevent it from becoming a refuge for the defeated 'Fascists'. We would also invade the country, to 'save its neutrality', if the West tried to counter Warsaw Pact military actions in Austria or Yugoslavia.

Scandinavia is of great strategic importance to the U.S.S.R., not only because of its common frontier with Finland and Norway, but as an essential stepping stone for an attack on Great Britain. The Soviet and Eastern European armies maintain a force of five million men in the Scandinavian sector. In the event of war, the armies of Poland and East Germany share responsibility with the Red Army for operations against Norway, Sweden, and Denmark; the Red Army alone would move into Finland. Espionage and subversion in Scandinavia has very high priority. Sweden, as the most powerful country in the area, was one of the main targets for our intelligence activities. We financed, in collaboration with the Poles and East Germans, the left-wing factions in the Swedish Social Democratic Party, and I recall that in the mid-1960s at least forty per cent of the S.D.P. was under our direction or influence. It appeared to be easier to penetrate than the other European Social Democratic Parties because of its left-wing leadership, its policies on such issues as the Vietnam war, and its anti-Imperialist attitude towards the Third World. We also observed some welcome Marxist strains in the party's domestic policies. We knew from Soviet agents around Olaf Palme, the Social Democratic leader, that although he despised Soviet Communism, he was a great admirer of Tito and Castro and was sympathetic to the kind of Communism later introduced by Dubcek. It is always the left-wing European Social Democratic Parties which are targets for penetration and manipulation by the Soviets. Those further to the right are regarded with some apprehension, since their adherence to Socialist principles makes them difficult to attack on ideological grounds.

The Swedish Communist Party was a maverick organization, not funded from Moscow, whose leaders resisted Soviet advice. As a counter-measure, the Russians sought out sympathizers in local Communist branches, from whom the Warsaw Pact intelligence services recruited agents for training at the Party and military political schools in Eastern Europe. I personally saw profiles of over 400 targets in the trade unions - up and coming men in the non-Communist union leadership who appeared to us to be in favour of progressive social change. There was a co-ordinating committee drawn from the Polish, Czech, East German, and Soviet trade unions to gather information about them and prepare plans for cultivating the most susceptible. Three held trade union positions

which gave them seats of influence in the International Federation of Free Trade Unions - the Western counterpart of the Communist World Federation of Trade Unions.

The espionage apparatus in Stockholm went by the name of the North Centre. The military and civilian intelligence services of the Pact were all represented in the Swedish capital, which was the main base for spying and subversion in Scandinavia. The main tasks of the Czech service were to penetrate the S.D.P., carry out technical espionage, and gain information on Sweden's military plans and capacity. In the annual display of stolen technology in the Ministry of the Interior building in Prague, arranged for members of the Politburo and senior military officers, Swedish devices and patents were frequently prominent.

If the progressive forces in Sweden were unable to gain and consolidate their power without a show of force, the Soviets were ready to offer military support. They believed that neither the U.S.A. nor any N.A.T.O. power would give military aid to Sweden, and that local military action against that country would be possible without fear of outside intervention.

In a general conflict with the West, all variants of the military operational plan provided for the invasion of Sweden on the first day of hostilities. The Pact expected to occupy the main centres of population within twenty-four hours, and hoped to capture the ports and industrial areas intact by the use of parachute troops. They thought a week would be enough to subdue the rest of the country, except perhaps for sporadic guerrilla resistance. I believe we had thoroughly penetrated the Swedish armed forces — we had excellent sources of military and technical intelligence.

The Norwegian section of the Plan noted the strong current of pacifism in Norwegian society, which was evident even in the armed forces. All the principal political parties had some Socialist characteristics, and one of our major objectives was to encourage the emergence of a united progressive movement. In particular, the planners proposed that we should promote the withdrawal of Norway from N.A.T.O. They believed that our policy of peaceful coexistence in Europe would weaken the will of the N.A.T.O. countries, and so reduce the pressure on Norway to remain in that

alliance. The focus of our political support was the Norwegian Communist Party, which was pro-Soviet and financed direct from Moscow. With the discovery and exploitation of North Sea oil, Norway has become an even more attractive prize for the Soviet Union, and no doubt the Plan has been revised accordingly.

The planners predicted that by the 1980s the progressive movement in Norway would have succeeded in abolishing the monarchy and establishing a People's Republic. They did not expect any of the European powers, who would have their own internal problems, to intervene, but if Sweden were to be so foolhardy as to try, the Soviet Union would undertake direct military action against the Swedes.

In 1961, before the Strategic Plan was drawn up, I attended a Warsaw Pact military meeting, where Marshal Biryuzov, a Soviet Deputy Defence Minister, told us that they had made a good start in recruiting agents of influence in the Norwegian universities. He said we should make more effort in that direction. As far as I know, we had no influential agents at that time among the political parties. Most of our espionage successes had been against N.A.T.O. bases in Norway using 'illegal' agents. These are agents who enter the country under false identities, operate their own networks, and have direct radio links with Moscow. They do not deal with or through the Soviet or satellite embassies.

There were at least three Czech illegals in Norway in 1961. But the Pact had made considerable inroads into the Norwegian trade union movement. I remember Jiri Hendrych, deputy to President Novotny, telling the Military Committee as early as 1965 that the strength of the progressive movement in the unions was growing to the point where they were ready to join the Communist World Federation of Trade Unions. In Norway, as in Sweden, the East European intelligence services recruited cadres from the unions and the Communist Party for training in the Military Political School in Moscow, to form the nucleus of the future 'People's Army'.

In the spring of 1967, I took part in a four-hour meeting with the Chief of Administration of Special Propaganda, a General Shev-chenko. We were asked to increase our propaganda activities in Scandinavia, and help prepare material for both peace and wartime operations. The aim was to collect compromising information on prospective Scandinavian leaders and fabricate material which

would damage relations between the major N.A.T.O. powers and Scandinavia.

A Joint Committee for Scandinavian operations was formed, which included the Poles, East Germans, Czechs, and Russians. We acquired most of the information we needed through the usual intelligence channels, but sometimes members of our own Department of Special Propaganda went out on operations, frequently under trade union cover.

The Warsaw Pact's intelligence effort in Denmark was extensive, which reflected its important position controlling the Skagerrak and Kattegat at the entrance to the Baltic. This has not diminished with the expansion of the Soviet Navy into a blue-water fleet, for although the bulk of the Northern fleet is based in Murmansk and the ports of the Barents Sea, most of the repair facilities are still in the Baltic. Moreover, the Soviet Baltic fleet, consisting of some forty submarines and sixty surface ships, is a valuable force for interrupting Atlantic commerce in wartime and for amphibious operations around Scandinavia.

All the East European intelligence services were represented in Copenhagen, working on political targets in an effort to change the anti-Soviet attitudes of the major parties. Some political leaders made no secret of their antipathy towards America, and the younger intelligentsia on the left wing of the Social Democratic, radical Liberal, and Socialist People's Parties seemed susceptible to progressive ideas.

The Plan required us Czechs to increase the number and activity of our agents working in Copenhagen against the Social Democratic Party. Of the five illegals being trained by our Minister of Defence, Lomsky, for military espionage in Scandinavia, three were used to work on the S.D.P. The idea was to infiltrate the younger generation of S.D.P. politicians, because the Russians thought little could be done with the current party leadership.

I have no doubt at all that President Urho Kekkonen of Finland collaborated closely and personally with the Kremlin. I can recall many discussions with the Soviet leaders in which they used the

phrase, 'This will be better done through Kekkonen.' He was very effective in putting over the fiction that the Russians did not dictate to the Finns, and that it was quite possible to be neutral and at the same time friendly with the Soviet Union, without any sacrifice of national sovereignty.

Finnish neutrality is convenient for the U.S.S.R. In 1966, when Marshal Grechko came to Prague to brief us on the military operational plan, he told me: 'We have concluded a private agreement with President Kekkonen whereby in the event of war with the West the Finns will declare their support for the Warsaw Pact, demand the status of non-belligerents, and make their territory and ports available to the armed forces of the Soviet Union.'

13

Western Europe and the Balkans

Belgium looked promising to the Soviet analysts. The last war, they felt, had left the Belgian people with an ingrained feeling of hostility towards Germany and a distaste for militarism, both of which undermined the country's contribution to N.A.T.O. The Soviets also thought they detected strong prejudices against the United States and the control that American companies and banks exerted on the economy.

We stepped up our espionage effort in Belgium when N.A.T.O. headquarters moved to Brussels from Fontainebleau. I remember hearing at a Military Committee meeting in Prague the same year that we then had four illegals operating in the country, in addition to the intelligence officers working under diplomatic cover, who occupied as much as sixty-five per cent of our diplomatic slots there. The Military Committee decided to send a further twenty-seven illegals to Belgium in the next ten years, of whom sixteen were allotted to military intelligence. The remainder would come under our Ministry of the Interior, their principal functions being technical espionage and 'agent of influence' operations. An 'agent of influence' is a national of the country where he operates, whose main purpose is to promote Soviet interests in political, labour, commercial, academic, and journalistic circles. By 1967, the Soviet analysts had concluded that these agents' operations should be stepped up, though our military espionage should remain at the current level.

The Strategic Plan predicted, with fatuous optimism it now appears, that by about 1980, following the expected defection of Italy

and Norway from N.A.T.O. and the growing demoralization of the Alliance, conditions would exist in Belgium for the emergence of a 'Democratic Coalition' which would declare Belgian neutrality and establish itself as a progressive government.

Holland, in the Soviet view, was one of the weakest links in N.A.T.O. Russian sources had identified two very encouraging streams of thought in the Dutch officer corps: first, they had no stomach for fighting a war with the Warsaw Pact; secondly, the Army was determined to stay out of politics and would obey any Dutch Government, however progressive. According to Soviet information, there was no distinction or advantage at all for a senior officer in the Dutch Army to be strongly pro-N.A.T.O.; it was, in fact, a handicap to his career. Lastly, the rank and file of the Army was strongly unionized, and the men would take their grievances, real or imagined, to their trade union rather than their military leaders. This was illustrated in 1978 when the Dutch provided a contingent for the U.N. peacekeeping force in the Lebanon; half the men refused to go and escaped service by appealing to their union.

After the Voltave manoeuvre - a full-scale exercise for the invasion of Western Europe - in 1965, Marshal Grechko told us that the Kremlin had excellent coverage of the Dutch General Staff, to which they had devoted a great deal of effort because of the strategic position of Holland. Grechko was confident that, whether or not N.A.T.O. continued as a viable organization, Holland would declare herself neutral in any conflict with the East, and the Dutch armed forces would not only support this decision but would actively resist any attempt by the Western powers to use Dutch ports or cross Dutch territory. He nevertheless expected Holland to become a battleground in the event of war in Western Europe. The Soviet ploy would be to recognize Dutch neutrality at once, and then to 'guarantee' its non-belligerent status by military occupation. At the end of hostilities the Red Army would ensure the emergence of a progressive government.

The Strategic Plan betrayed Soviet suspicions of the French Communist Party. The Kremlin feared it would try to dominate

Western Europe and influence the East European Parties, even after the Communization of Europe. The Russians' problem was how to help the French Party to achieve power while at the same time keeping a check on French influence. They considered the French Communist Party to be more dangerous to their interests than even the Italian Party, because the French, unlike the Italians, always operated on sound Marxist principles. General Yepishev told me in the spring of 1967 that the main trouble with the French comrades was that they were sick with Gaullism - a criticism which also appeared in the Plan. We must, he said, do everything possible to cure this sickness, and to prevent the creation of any Rome-Paris axis; similarly, we should make no attempt to popularize the French Party in the satellite countries.

The architects of the Strategic Plan stated that there were two groups in the French Party, one nationalist, the other pro-Soviet. At that time the leader of the Soviet faction was Jacques Duclos, now dead, who was, in my opinion, a K.G.B. agent. He was the Kremlin's main contact in the French Politburo. The influence of the nationalists was to be eliminated before the Party reached government. Some of the nationalist faction later did the Kremlin's work for it by protesting against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in terms which enabled the Party to expel them. Penetration of them received high priority and, because of our traditional relationship with France, Czechoslovakia had special responsibility for the task.

The Plan directed us in particular on to targets among the Jewish intellectuals and *apparatelinks* in the Party. We released two important men for this work. One was Pavel Ausperg, who was Head of the Foreign Department. He was slavishly pro-Soviet and was fielded by the Party after the Prague Spring to thank the Russians for their 'fraternal aid'. The other was Vladimir Ruml, whom I knew in the Army, formerly Director of the Institute of Marxist-Leninism in the Academy of Science. We organized a programme of indoctrination and instruction for our own artists and intellectuals so that they could contribute to our efforts when visiting France.

The French Party leadership was naturally most eager to gain office as soon as possible, but the Soviet leaders did not want this to happen until the Party was better organized. The threat from the Army must be removed by infiltration of the officer corps and the N.C.O.s, a field we felt the Party had sadly neglected. We were to

urge our French comrades to remember the lesson of the 1948 coup in Czechoslovakia, when our Party's success was guaranteed by the Minister of Defence, General Svoboda, who was a secret Communist and who ordered the Czech Army to keep out of the struggle.

We were dismayed by the dogmatic attitude of some of the French cadres, who professed to believe that any collaboration with the bourgeois parties sullied the revolutionary purity of Communism. We suggested they should take an opportunistic attitude towards the bourgeoisie because co-operation with them would take some of the wind out of the sails of the Party's bitterest anti-Soviet critics. We did not want to frighten the opposition too soon. Our advice to the French Party was to wait and not provoke either domestic crises or any deterioration in France's relations with her allies until the Party was strong enough to handle them. In the meantime, the Party must try to improve the quality of its support.

Among the fruits of our efforts has been the emergence in France, Spain, and Italy of 'Euro-communism'. This process is exactly what the Russians wanted in Western Europe. Euro-communism is a truly Marxist movement. I am in no doubt that people who think it is something different are in for a big disappointment. If the Euro-communists will not permit disagreement within their own ranks now, at a time when they are out of power, they are unlikely to be more tolerant when they become rulers.

The Warsaw Pact had to recruit 'agents of influence' in high places in France, in order to maintain that country's disruptive role in Western Europe. But if war broke out with the Pact, we assumed France would never use her nuclear missiles or her *force defrappe.* The Plan anticipated the capitulation of the French Government as soon as the Warsaw Pact armies crossed the Rhine and Soviet parachute armies dropped around her principal cities. Nevertheless, strategic missiles would still be used against the main economic and military targets, including the industrial sites around Paris, and ports such as Marseilles and Bordeaux. It was clear to me from what I saw in the Soviet analyses and the detailed contingency arrangements in the operational plan that the Soviet and other East European intelligence services had thoroughly penetrated the French political, administrative, and military establishments up to the highest level, including the Cabinet.

In Franco's Spain, the Communist Party had been pursuing since 1956 a policy of 'National Reconciliation' and collaboration with the various opposition parties. Its immediate result was that the Eastern European Communist Parties began to dispense funds to those opposition parties and to the liberal leaders in exile. Sometimes they used the clandestine network of the Spanish Communists, sometimes the political channels of the European Social Democratic Parties. The exiled leaders of the Spanish bourgeois parties were also encouraged to visit Eastern Europe. For example, in 1962 or 1963 we brought over three of these leaders from France to meet Zdenek Fierlinger, the former leader of the Czech Social Democratic Party, who in 1968 had been responsible for uniting that party with the Communists; he was by this time a member of the Politburo and Chairman of the Czech Parliament. The same group of Spaniards also saw Otto Grotewohl in East Germany, who, like Fierlinger, was a former Social Democrat.

The veteran Communist Dolores Ibarurri, 'La Passionaria', caused the Soviets great trouble, because she hated and distrusted all Spaniards except those who had fought with her in the Civil War. The Kremlin could not agree with such inflexibility, and we were asked to bring our influence to bear on her during her vacation trips to Czechoslovakia. Novotny told us, T usually try to keep out of her way, because she's constantly pressing me to send parachute divisions to Spain to overthrow Franco!' But the Russians could not ignore her because the old revolutionary cadres were still behind her.

In about 1963 I was present at a lunch given for her by Vladimir Koucky, a Secretary of the Central Committee; she was in Czechoslovakia for medical treatment. Before she arrived, Koucky complained of the difficulties the Russians had in dealing with her 'Stalinist school of Communism'.

'They've been trying to isolate her from the main body of the Spanish Communist Party,' he told us, 'and they hope we have better success in moderating her views.'

In the course of the lunch, Dolores Ibarurri agreed, after receiving some of our intelligence reports, that the attitude of the Spanish students had changed, but not that of the intelligentsia - 'They are all still Fascists!' She was equally stubborn in refusing to collaborate with any liberal elements in the armed forces.

'The revolutionary cadres and the working classes,' she declared, 'will destroy Franco!'

The Spanish Communist Party, according to a Soviet analysis we received, was divided into three factions. The first was La Passionaria's, which believed in the necessity of violence and was described by the Russians as the 'Dogmatic Group'. Her support in the Party was dwindling, they believed, and was less than a quarter of the membership in the early 1960s. The second group, the so-called 'liberals', were against violence and favoured the formation of a 'National Front'; they believed the Party should maintain a democratic attitude to the people and only take power if it enjoyed majority support. The Russians called them naive and 'Utopian'.

Around 1963, a delegation of these liberals made an illegal visit to Prague. Although the invitation came from the Czech Party, it had been inspired by Santiago Carrillo, leader of the third, or centrist, Communist faction in Spain. Carrillo wanted to gain control of the liberals in order to consolidate his position against the 'Dogmatic Group'. The Czech Party wanted to convince the Liberals that, while the Communist Party must supply the national leadership, other groups committed to Socialism might make a contribution. To this end they introduced the delegation to Josef Plojhar, an unfrocked priest who nevertheless held the Chairmanship of the Czech Catholic Priests' Organization as well as of the Czech People's Party - a group that enjoyed nominal independence from the Communist Party. The liberals seemed impressed.

From our own sources we were aware that Carrillo and his group believed that the Communist Parties in Western Europe had more in common with each other than with the Soviet Union, and he was unwilling to be dictated to by the Soviet Party. Carrillo told us that he believed some principles of Communism were universal. For example, the Spanish Communist Party must obtain power and not relinquish it; it must control the organs of state to maintain its position; and it must destroy Capitalism. However, he was convinced that in Spain the Communists must not alienate the middle class and the intelligentsia, but integrate them into the progressive movement.

When I visited Moscow as part of a Czech delegation in 1960, we were told to use our intelligence sources in the Vatican and our agents in the French and Italian press and radio to smear Franco's

supporters in the Catholic Church with the taint of Fascism, and try to separate them from the progressive elements in the Spanish church. Nevertheless, we were told that the longer the Franco regime survived, the more time it would have to alienate people and thereby help us bring about radical changes when he died.

I discovered soon afterwards that our role included a three-year programme of training courses for seven Communist cadres from Spain, two of them to be trained by the Ministry of Defence. The Soviet military and K.G.B. schools would prepare military and intelligence cadres for the positions they would hold when the Communists took power in Spain. General Kalashnik, chief ideologist of the Red Army, said that the Spanish Communist Party had failed in the past to infiltrate the Spanish armed forces, implying that they were now beginning to do so in preparation for Franco's demise.

In those days, at least, the Soviet Union did not believe in individual acts of terrorism, such as practised by the Basque nationalists, as a method of achieving social change, although they would seek to profit from any unstable situation brought about by terrorist activities. They felt that the threat to the whole underground apparatus resulting from terrorism outweighed the results achieved. Instead, they favoured mass strikes and protests to provoke Franco into using terror to preserve his position, which in turn would alienate both the Spanish people and the democratic West.

The Soviet leaders had very good intelligence coverage of Franco's Government. I remember seeing Cabinet-level documents from Spain in our Military Committee from at least 1961 onwards. In 1966, during a series of meetings to discuss the work of the Czech Ministry of Defence, a Spanish Cabinet document reporting conversations between Franco and his Ministers on foreign policy was produced. It revealed that Franco was going to ask for increasing sums of money from the United States for their bases in Spain. His Prime Minister was quoted as saying, 'They need us, so they must pay for it.' The paper went on to say that Spain should improve relations with the Soviet bloc, both for economic reasons and in order to put pressure on the West. Franco also thought that better relations with the bloc might moderate Eastern European support for the Spanish underground movements.

Our espionage operations in Spain suffered from the absence of any diplomatic relations between the Communist bloc and Spain

which could have served as a means of establishing legal residents; we therefore had to use illegals. In this field the Russians made the greatest effort, but the Hungarians and Czechs were close behind. The Czechs particularly regretted the diplomatic barriers between themselves and the Spaniards, because their reputation had always been high among us. In our history books, everything Spanish, even the Spanish nobility, had been held up to admiration.

Illegal operators, whether of the classic type — those operating under false identities - or members of the emigre community, engaged in both espionage work and the penetration of nationalist opposition groups, including the dissident monarchists. I saw a list of Czech illegals in Spain when I was on the Military Committee in 1964. There were four of them, drawn from all our various secret services, and more were undergoing training.

The Kremlin considered - rightly, as it turned out - that the only way to bring about decolonization in Portugal's overseas territories was to destroy Fascism inside Portugal itself. In 1963, Boris Ponamarev, head of the International Department of the Soviet Central Committee, visited Prague to exhort us to increase our financial, material, technical, and training support to the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies. At the same time, he told us to make special efforts towards unifying all the anti-Fascist forces in Portugal. We had already spent more than ten years in helping to create a secret Communist infra-structure there, and Russia had been at it much longer. We had also created networks in Africa linking progressive elements in the Army with the African liberation movements.

The vigorous underground Communist Party of Portugal enjoyed the total confidence of the Russians, who regarded its leader, Alvaro Cunhal, as the most dependable of their agents. They asked us to take care of him when he escaped from Lisbon to Prague in 1961. He stayed there until 1968 when, after publicly supporting the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, he left for Moscow.

In response to the Soviet directive, we invited a delegation of non-Communist Portuguese officers who had served in the colonies to visit Prague secretly in 1966 to discuss with us our own experience of organizing a national front. We promised to finance the resistance

group that these officers represented, in the hope of promoting an anti-Fascist union. We were already funding the Portuguese Communist Party, as were the Russians.

As a matter of routine, Communist Party cadres from Portugal came to Czechoslovakia for Party education and propaganda, and some even went on to special courses in the 'Highest Party School' in Prague. Those destined for training in sabotage and guerrilla work went to the Soviet Union rather than Czechoslovakia, but they usually passed through Prague en route. Cunhal was unhappy about the arrangement, for he preferred to have these cadres within his reach in Prague; but the Russians overruled him.

We arranged meetings in Prague between Cunhal and Samora Machel, then head of Frelimo and later President of Mozambique. Machel was anxious to keep these contacts secret, because in the view of many of his followers the Portuguese Communist Party was no different from the Lisbon Fascist Government - both were white oppressors. The object of these meetings was to arrange direct communication between the Communists' organization in the Army and Machel's Frelimo, in order to frustrate the Army's efforts in Mozambique and bring the war to an early conclusion. Cunhal also took advantage of our hospitality to meet and co-ordinate plans with Agostinho Neto of Angola and the other leaders of the M.P.L.A. Cunhal had an invidious position in all these talks, because the Russians always sent an observer from Moscow, or nominated the Soviet Ambassador to attend them, and so the Africans were left in no doubt that the Soviet Union was in charge.

The Strategic Plan directed that when a progressive government came to power in Portugal, there should be no question of her withdrawing from N.A.T.O. Such a government should not needlessly provoke the West, but rather take advantage of its access to N.A.T.O.'s military secrets while the Alliance lasted.

In about 1967 we discovered that Cunhal's planning was at variance with our own and that of the Soviet leaders. Cunhal imagined it would be possible to provoke a Socialist revolution in Portugal very soon after Antonio de Oliveira Salazar's death. Although Cunhal was a fine organizer, as well as a loyal Marxist, he was too dogmatic for his own good and he stuck stubbornly to his own views. Finally the Russians had to send Boris Ponomarev to Prague to bring him into line. Ponomarev told him bluntly that

without Soviet support he, and the Portuguese Communists, would get nowhere - though Cunhal was welcome to try. Ponomarev made Cunhal realize that he was expendable, and further cut him down to size by rejecting his request for a role in co-ordinating Soviet support for Frelimo and the M.P.L.A. Ponomarev made it quite clear that Africa was no longer any of Cunhal's business, and he must restrict his activities to Portugal.

The main task for the Warsaw Pact in Italy was to secure her withdrawal from N.A.T.O. The establishment of Soviet Communism in that country was a secondary objective. In 1968, when I left Prague, the main obstacle to Soviet ambitions in Italy was the Italian Communist Party, (the P.C.I.), which was adopting a dangerously independent, or 'centrist', position in its relations with the Kremlin.

Alter the World Conference of Communist Parties in Moscow in 1960, the K.G.B., with Czech collaboration, began to organize Maoist groups in Italy, to convince the P.C.I. that Maoism was a threat. Soviet objectives were, first, to frighten the P.C.I. back to the Soviet Party; secondly, to attract true Maoists to these groups and thus identify them; and, thirdly, to establish channels to the People's Republic of China that they could control.

Soviet fears about the P.C.I. increased after a meeting between Luigi Longo and Tito. The Warsaw Pact received full details of this meeting from sources in the Politburo of the P.C.I. and in Tito's entourage.

It was central to Soviet strategy that the P.C.I. should not achieve power before Italy's withdrawal from N.A.T.O. in order not to alarm the West. In this way the Russians hoped to encourage the less committed members of the Alliance, like Norway, Denmark, Holland, and Canada, to follow Italy's example. They believed that by the early 1980s only the United States, West Germany, and Britain would remain as members.

For the Russians, therefore, Italy was only a pawn - though a well placed one - in a larger European game, but they had no doubts that they would be able to control her once the P.C.I. came to power. I recall some words of Marshal Grechko in 1964; we had just officially opened a new 'House of Culture' in a village near the Polish border, and there was an Italian delegation among the guests. Proposing a

toast, Grechko told them that once the P.C.I. was in power, his tanks would ensure the Party's loyalty.

'The Soviet Army is the only guarantor of Socialism,' he said, 'and no European Communist should delude himself that the progressive movement can obtain and keep control in Western Europe without the support of the Warsaw Pact.'

Nevertheless, the P.C.I. continued to follow their own path in the belief that they could resist Soviet attempts to take them over. President Novotny told me, in some disgust, that Luigi Longo, in conversations with the Czech leadership, had revealed that he and the P.C.I. Politburo were unanimous in agreeing that not a single adviser from the Soviet Union would be accepted after they came to power.

But one way the Russians have preserved their influence in Italy is by manipulating the flow of funds from East European countries. There are two principal methods for this financing operation. The first is through the trading companies set up by Togliatti after his return to Italy from Moscow at the end of the Second World War. They have grown substantially since 1945, and Soviet policy has been to channel trade from Eastern Europe to Italy through them. The Russians have also adopted a strategy of awarding major contracts to Italian companies. The U.S.S.R. bought a nitrogen fertilizer plant from Italy in 1965 or 1966, in spite of more competitive bids from Britain and the U.S.A. In the same way, the contract for the Togliatti car plant in Russia eventually went to Fiat, rather than to British Eeyland or others who tendered. Those deals were intended to strengthen the hands of pro-Soviet elements in the P.C.I. as well as increase Soviet influence in industrial circles.

The second method of financing the P.C.I. is by direct cash subsidies passed to it through diplomatic and intelligence channels. Estimates published in the *New York Times* and the European press suggest that the P.C.I. receives up to 35 per cent of its income in the form of subsidies from Eastern Europe.

Soviet strategy in Italy is closely linked to Warsaw Pact plans for Yugoslavia. The intention was that after Tito's death and the restoration of Soviet control over Yugoslavia, the Pact would be in a position to apply direct pressure on the P.C.I. and keep a reformed Party in government. In its bid for power, the P.C.I. has given a pledge to keep Italy within N.A.T.O. but the West should not be fooled by

this. The Italian Communist Party's leader, Enrico Berlinguer, supports the Soviet policy of detente, as any Communist must. After all, in Marxist ideology, peaceful co-existence is no more than the latest stage in the struggle to achieve the dictatorship of the proletariat, although in practice it is becoming a synonym for Soviet efforts to extend their power by every means short of nuclear war. Meanwhile, the P.C.I.'s attitude to N.A.T.O. is simply calculated not to alarm Western Europe and to lull potential partners in a coalition into a false sense of security.

The threat to Italy can only be understood in the light of the Soviet Plan for Yugoslavia. This did not envisage Yugoslavia being fully absorbed into the Warsaw Pact and Comecon as long as Tito was alive; but the Russians worked out various contingency plans to operate after his death. They intended to exploit the nationalities question by infiltrating the nationalist leadership, and to penetrate the various opposition movements which in Tito's waning years would be drawn increasingly into Government. Thus they hoped to have covert Soviet sympathizers at the centre of power. They also planned to foment trouble between the working classes, the technocrats and managers, and the trade union hierarchy. The Soviet object was to destroy the established economic order to enable their own agents to emerge at the top and force Yugoslavia into greater dependence on Comecon. They hoped that their agents in the armed forces and the police would at least prevent any lurch towards the West on Tito's death; and they expected their own, illegal, Communist Party, which had infiltrated Tito's official Party, to be the only cohesive force in the ensuing vacuum.

The contingency plan most favoured by the Russians assumed the emergence in Belgrade of a pro-Soviet faction, which would activate the illegal Communist Party and the pro-Soviet factions in each of the constituent republics. The Russians were ready to provide this faction with all the help it might need to consolidate its hold on the country, including military assistance.

If Western supporters should turn out to be the strongest, the Soviet faction would try to unite all the opposition groups in the name of keeping Yugoslavia free and independent. If the pro-Western groups were so stupid as to try to take the country into the

Capitalist camp, the Russians would recognize the illegal Party as the provisional Government, and respond to its 'request' for help with full military force. Lastly, if the pro-Western group managed to control the whole country, and if it refrained from provocative actions - the least welcome prospect from the Soviet point of view — the Russians would try to break up Yugoslavia into separate states, by promoting, for example, the unification of Macedonia and Bulgaria.

While the Russians hoped to achieve their aims in Yugoslavia with at least the acquiescence of the West and without military action, if they met with only partial success the temptation would be very great for them to activate one of their contingency plans. Complete success would give them access to the Mediterranean and strike a heavy blow at N.A.T.O.'s southern flank. It would also give the Soviet bloc a common frontier with Italy, and so make the P.C.I. more responsive to Moscow.

The importance of Turkey needs no emphasis, both as a guardian of N.A.T.O.'s southern flank and as 'the gateway to the Middle East', to use Kosygin's words. The Russians always maintained a high degree of combat readiness on their Turkish frontier. We had a demonstration of it when I visited Armenia in 1963 with General Lornsky and the Soviet Marshal Bagramyan. We inspected Soviet units there in the company of Marshal Koshevoy, Commander of the Caucasus Military District. His troops were quartered in subterranean bunkers, not barracks, and were held on alert. Koshevoy believed he could take Turkey in two days — always providing it had left N.A.T.O. He told us that he was aware of N.A.T.O.'s operational plans in Turkey, and that Soviet military intelligence had first-class, up-to-date information on Turkish capabilities. His own forces, he said, were extremely flexible; he had special formations trained to parachute into Turkey in support of left-wing insurgents.

The Strategic Plan treated Turkey as if it were a developing country and identified the Army as the most promising instrument of change. In consequence, the Russians decided to try and isolate the senior officers, who presumably favoured N.A.T.O., and suborn the younger, junior officers to form the nucleus of a movement to change

the Government. But they recognized that an Army coup could not survive by itself, and they thought it necessary to provide a political base to consolidate it and the new government. They intended to form this base, not from the mass of illiterate peasants, but from the lower middle classes; the latter, they thought, would be more amenable to persuasion and manipulation.

This analysis was founded on the belief that the economic depression and permanent inflation in Turkey was making radicals out of the middle classes, whose rewards were always falling short of their expectations. When Viktor Grishin, then chief of the Soviet trade unions, visited Prague in 1963, he told me that the Soviet trade unions had excellent contacts with the Turkish National Confederation of Unions (which was not a member of either the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions or the Communist World Federation).

'I am encouraged,' he added, 'by the unity of the working and middle classes, who are becoming more and more proletarianized by their economic circumstances. This has a useful influence on the junior officers, who are often of poor middle-class background. However, we must watch the radical fringe in the middle class, to make sure its anarchism doesn't endanger this development and provoke a Fascist reaction.'

The economic agreement signed in 1967 by Turkey and the U.S.S.R. marked the first big step towards an improvement in relations between the two. While the Russians gave covert support to the progressives, they also made every effort to improve relations with Turkey. As a result of their efforts they expected Turkey would be ready to withdraw from N.A.T.O. by 1977-they had not, of course, foreseen the Cyprus crisis - and that a national coalition of progressive parties would emerge to form a neutralist government. The plan was to use our allies in the Third World to draw Turkey into the non-aligned movement. Simultaneously, we would advance on the economic front by offering Ankara substantial aid for development programmes, which the Turks, under progressive influence, would eagerly accept.

From the Soviet point of view, Greece had two major advantages over Turkey: first, there already existed an indigenous Communist

Party — the K.K.E. — whereas in Turkey the Party was banned; secondly, there were large numbers of Communist Greek emigres, mainly in Bulgaria, who had either (led or been abducted during the Greek Civil War of 1947-9. The Bulgarian intelligence service held the major responsibility for operations in Greece under the Strategic Plan, because they controlled the greatest number of Greek emigres, and Bulgaria shared a border with Greece.

The main objectives of the Soviet Union, both before and since the Colonels' coup, have been first to help the K.K.E. create a strong underground network; secondly, to purge the K.K.E. of Chinese and Albanian influences. The Russians regarded the second objective as the more important, because they had co-operated closely with Albania in support of the K.K.E. before the Sino-Soviet split. The Albanians had provided most of the agents from the Communist bloc and therefore had a great deal of influence in the K.K.E. The Russians considered this dangerous, since the Albanian element was pro-Chinese rather than pro-Soviet.

Following the Colonels' coup in 1967, the Russians believed that after some ten or twelve years of Fascist rule the Communist-dominated underground would become so strong that when revolution at last broke out a progressive government would immediately emerge. They also believed that the national character of the revolt would mean that N.A.T.O. would not dare to intervene. Although events have shown this forecast to be wrong, I am certain that the Russians are still seeking to absorb Greece into the Soviet bloc.

The Russians were not partisans of Enosis - the union of Cyprus with Greece - nor did they care about Turkish domination of the island. They regarded Cyprus as an invaluable trouble spot and a useful distraction for the West which served to inflame relations between Greece and Turkey and weaken the eastern flank of N.A.T.O. Their own long-term plan was the unification of Cyprus under a Communist government drawn from both the Greek and Turkish communities.

14

The Plan for Britain and Australia

The Strategic Plan for Britain began with a preamble of 8-10 pages dealing with the Soviet view of the United Kingdom - as it appeared to them in 1967 - followed by 25 pages of particular plans and policies; the latter included specific details of Czech participation in those operations.

In the Soviet view, political development - in other words progress towards Communism - had been slow at first, but had begun to accelerate in the 1960s. The trade unions, under Labour Party control, were mostly passive until about 1956, when they became more militant and began to have greater political influence. In the economic sphere, the colonies subsidized the British standard of living, while Britain was strong militarily and had the use of extensive bases overseas. At home, the vigilance of the security service protected the people from the entry and spread of Marxism. The British security and intelligence services were the best outside the Soviet bloc.

By about 1960, the situation had started to change. Britain had lost her colonies, her military strength had declined, and with it her political and economic influence in the Middle East and Asia. Simultaneously, British attitudes soured towards the United States, while anti-British feeling increased in Europe, especially in France — a development fostered by Soviet-inspired disinformation and by Soviet foreign policy.

Inside Britain there was increasing dissatisfaction amongst the workers, trouble was stirring in Northern Ireland, and there were

rumbles of discontent even in Wales. Marxism was becoming strong in the trade unions and Labour Party, while trade union influence on the Government was increasing, although the Labour movement was still inspired more by material than ideological motives. The Government found itself more and more on the defensive in the face of demands by the unions and the Marxists.

Lastly, Soviet influence, promoted by their intelligence services, was expanding throughout the world and limiting British influence. The main objective of the Soviet Strategic Plan as a whole was to isolate and encircle Europe, which would hit the U.K. hardest because of its dependence on foreign trade. Britain would also suffer from any exploitation of world market forces through the control of oil and supplies of raw materials.

In order to promote a swing to the left w i t h i n Britain and force the pace of radical change, progressive forces must take over the trade unions and penetrate the Labour Party. First, however, the role of the trade union movement must be changed, so that it became accepted as a pillar of Government. In Communist jargon, the 'first power' is the Government and Parliament; the tactical plan for Britain was to organize a second, or alternative, power base on the left wing of the Labour Party, the Communist Party, and the trade unions - the last, of course, having been wholly radicalized. The Soviet view was that it was also essential to destroy the military and security organizations, including the police force.

Because Britain and West Germany were the only steadfast supporters of N.A.T.O. in Europe, the Alliance must be eroded. It was essential to frustrate any plan to retrieve British and West German security from the ruins of N.A.T.O. by forming alternative alliances, such as a tripartite pact with the U.S.A.

We Czechs received no briefing on the roles of the other satellites in fulfilling Soviet strategic ambitions against Britain. But we had a good idea of the scope of the attack against her, because the premises on which it was based were the same for us all. Most of the operational objectives existed before the Plan was drawn up. For example, our attempts to subvert British trade unions under Soviet guidance pre-dated it by some years.

One of the main objectives of the Strategic Plan was to discredit and weaken the bourgeois leadership in the U.K. Early in the 1960s, Soviet strategists decided that the Warsaw Pact's war contingency

plans should not only provide for sabotage operations to cripple vital British industrial, defence, and communications installations as a prelude to war, but should also include measures whereby Soviet forces - or a progressive government established by them - might settle accounts with the bourgeois leaders. In the spring of 1964, Aleksandr Shelepin, who was then Party Secretary in charge of the K.G.B. and has since been to Britain as an honoured guest of the T.U.C., gave Novotny a list of British leaders in politics, industry, the Army, and the police who were considered potentially hostile to a progressive government, as well as influential in the community. I was present in the Military Committee when Novotny told us about it.

The list ran to several hundred names, including leading members of all the main political parties. The section on the Conservative Party went down to constituency level. The list was compiled by the K.G.B. with the help of agents in the British Communist Party. Beside each name was a short biographical note, together with the action contemplated. The latter ranged from temporary detention to execution without trial. Prominent figures of the 1960s such as Edward Heath, Sir Alex Douglas-Home, and Harold Wilson were to undergo show trials before execution. The Kremlin incorporated this list into the Strategic Plan, and vigorously kept it up to date.

The Soviets believed that around the end of the 1970s, economic and social conditions in Britain would have become so desperate that it might be possible to precipitate both a crisis of leadership and a collapse of national morale by assassinating selected British personalities. The murders were to take place during their visits to Third World countries, where such killings should be easier. They made a list of about fifty anti-progressives, and sought Czech collaboration on the operational planning and staff work. The Soviet idea was to carry out the murders in Third World countries, preferably former colonies, with the help of extreme nationalist groups. In this way they would be interpreted as a repudiation of Britain and British Imperialism by the developing world.

The Czech Minister of the Interior, Joseph Kudrna, held responsibility under the Strategic Plan for co-ordinating compromise operations by our intelligence services against important figures in the political, military, and intelligence hierarchies. The list of political targets was extensive, headed by Wilson and Heath. The methods of

compromise were to be the traditional ones - sex, money, and any other suitable human weakness. As an indication of the success we had already achieved before I defected, I particularly remember Kudrna boasting at a Politburo meeting that we had enough on one British M.P. to hang him.

We were also responsible under the Plan for smear operations. I remember we made plans to ruin a number of Conservative politicians by concocting evidence of their close ties with West German Fascist organizations. We also planned to smear senior members of the Labour Party, to assist the rise to power of more progressive politicians. We were required, too, to plan financial support for the rise of these progressives.

The progressive movement — the Communist Party and its sympathizers - had instructions to agitate for changes in the laws governing trade union rights and responsibilities, in order to increase the importance of the unions and build up their prestige. Soviet policy was to encourage union demands for a greater say in industrial management, to help establish the unions as the 'second power'. The Russians saw this issue as a means of pushing not only the trade union movement but also their supporters in the Parliamentary Labour Party further to the left.

The Soviet leadership hoped that the British trade unions would be guided by contacts with the East European trade union movement, and they proposed to work towards the creation of an all-European trade union organization to achieve their ends. When Shelepin was appointed head of the Soviet Central Trade Union Council in 1966, Novotny told me that this development showed how seriously the Russians regarded this field of exploitation. About the same time, the Czechs appointed a senior official of the Central Committee, Pastyrik, to lead their own trade unions; he was made an alternate member of the Politburo to mark the importance of his work. Prague was the headquarters of the World Federation of Trade Unions, and the Czechs were given particular responsibility in the Strategic Plan for developing contacts with the British and European unions.

Vladimir Koucky, Secretary of the Central Committee with responsibility for foreign policy, informed me at a gathering of Political Commissars in 1967 that the Russians had advised the British Communist Party to establish industrial schools in key

industries for its members and sympathizers. They also asked it to nominate suitable candidates for trade union courses in Czechoslovakia. International companies, especially those under American ownership such as Ford and Chrysler, appeared in the Plan as targets for industrial militancy and agitation. The idea was to force out management and have workers' committees take over their factories. By the end of the 1970s, when Britain's economic situation was expected to be already fairly bleak, the Soviet Union was prepared to provide employment for those factories by offering joint enterprises.

The Plan predicted that by about 1980 the erosion of Parliamentary government and the growth of the 'second power' would have reached a stage where each factory would have its own 'Committee for Democracy and Economic Development', where the real power would reside. Similar committees, uniting progressive members of the intelligentsia, disillusioned supporters of the old parties, and workers, would start to gain authority in the towns and cities as a prelude to the birth of the new order.

But the Russians were far from happy with the performance of the British Communist Party. John Gollan never liked Brezhnev; he once described him to Novotny - who passed it on to me — as an 'idiot'. That was after the overthrow of Khrushchev. Gollan had angry exchanges with Brezhnev when he visited Moscow in 1965. Novotny told me afterwards that Brezhnev had criticized Gollan because in Britain very few people had been recruited for revolutionary tasks - meaning those who would form the leadership of the 'second power'. Brezhnev accused Gollan of 'sectionalism' and of failing to work closely enough with the middle classes. Moreover, Gollan had failed to penetrate significantly the armed forces and the security services through attaching too little importance to this task for his own dogmatic reasons.

The Russians decided that the British Communist Party leadership was too conservative, and therefore British trainers should be selected for Party schools in Czechoslovakia by using 'other channels', i.e. intelligence channels. Gollan concluded that Brezhnev had no experience of a country like Britain, where the bourgeoisie controlled everything - including, he alleged, the working classes - and living standards were high.

Although Brezhnev criticized the British Communist Party for its

failure to penetrate the military, security, and intelligence services, he admitted at a secret Warsaw Pact meeting in Moscow in 1964 that the Pact countries were also to be blamed for their lack of success in this field.

The Plan directed us Czechs to step up our training of British cadres. The British Party was allowed to put up some candidates, but others were selected through 'intelligence channels'. In 1967, we offered twelve British Party members two months of political and military training, the 'Political Organization Course', which included lessons in sabotage. Later, however, the number dropped to four or five per year. These trainees were to arrive in Prague independently, and not to be made known to each other. Their sabotage training was carried out under General Hejna, First Deputy Chief of the Main Political Administration of our Ministry of Defence, later First Secretary of the Regional Party Committee in South Bohemia.

The Russians planned to undermine the British intelligence service by playing up its close relationship with the Americans and by operations purporting to show that it was spying in Europe and elsewhere as a tool of the C.I.A.

At the same time, the Plan recommended the promotion of disillusionment in the armed forces through propaganda designed to convince them of their futility, particularly after the closure of the overseas bases. The Soviet leaders intended more and more to use progressives in the trade union movement and the Labour Party to demand reductions in defence expenditure and the conversion of defence industries to more productive civilian activities. But they had no intention in their Plan of reducing their own military strength, even after the dissolution of N.A.T.O. and the reduction of West European defence forces to a wholly ineffective level.

The Russians were quick to see the value to them of the situation in Ulster. I remember a delegation of three representatives of the I.R.A. visiting Czechoslovakia in 1963 to seek arms, training, and financial support. Their visit was arranged through military intelligence channels, after a decision by the Military Committee to allot a maximum sum of 3 million crowns ($60,000) to the I.R.A. This decision was endorsed by our Politburo and by the Russians.

The delegation came under the wing of the Department for Foreign Aid in our Ministry of Defence, which was directly responsible to the Chief of Staff. The I.R.A. delegates were welcomed by Lieutenant-Colonel Frantisek Trojan, head of the Organization Department of the Ministry of Defence: he left the Ministry in 1964 to work for military intelligence.

We supplied the I.R.A. with light weapons, machine-guns, hand grenades, explosives, and field communications equipment. We thought the I.R.A. was asking for more than they could use, but we agreed to take five or six of their trainees in 1964 for a two-month course on political organization and guerrilla warfare. They were trained individually and not made known to each other in Czechoslovakia.

The full allotment of 3 million crowns was all spent in 1964. By comparison, the Czechs were providing at this time 50 million crowns in aid to the North Vietnamese and Vietcong. I estimate it cost about 100,000 crowns ($2,000) to train one man for one year. Moreover, the next year our Politburo decided, after consultation with the Russians, to make financial provision for the I.R.A. in the Five-Year-Plan for the years 1965-70; and continued support for the movement became a part of the Strategic Plan.

The Plan defined the political goals of the Warsaw Pact - in other words, of the Kremlin - as follows: to support the 'progressive anti-colonialist movement' in Northern Ireland; to help the people of Northern Ireland gain their freedom and independence from Great Britain; to establish a democratic and socialist regime in Northern Ireland as a prelude to the unification of Ireland as a Socialist state. The Kremlin did not want the unification of Ireland to take place until a 'Socialist state' had been created in the North, because their planners thought the Northern militants would be overwhelmed by the Catholic, bourgeois South.

By 1967, the Czechs and Russians were convinced that the I.R.A. needed re-educating, because they seemed to be interested in guerrilla warfare for its own sake and were neglecting the political offensive. In Communist jargon, the I.R.A. had become 'anarchic'. The Czechs therefore used their military intelligence channels to pass on to the I.R.A. certain directives they had received from the Kremlin: the I.R.A. must devote more effort to the political struggle, while at the same time continuing guerrilla activity; they should

concentrate the political and military attack, not solely on the Protestant community, but on the British authorities in Northern Ireland; they should extend the battle to the mainland of Britain, to increase its impact on the British Government and people.

The Russians revealed their attitude to Britain and the E.E.C. in the preamble to their Plan. They believed that the United Kingdom would become more and more dependent on the U.S.A. in proportion to her economic decline and dwindling status as a world power. This dependence would be in striking contrast to the increasing independence of the countries of Western Europe from America as they grew in economic and political stature. The Kremlin considered it essential to prevent Britain's entry into the E.E.C. because they believed her membership of it could contribute substantially to Britain's economic and political recovery. They wanted Britain to increase her dependence on the U.S.A., in order to isolate her further from Europe. They even stated in the Plan that if Britain joined the Common Market she would strengthen it economically, and would bolster the political forces opposed to the progressive movement in Europe.

The Soviet planners believed that the main instruments for keeping Britain out of the Common Market were the Labour Party and the trade union movement. In compliance with the Plan, we set up a special Soviet-Czech study group under the authority of the Main Political Administration Committee of the Party to prepare and propose material for disinformation. The propaganda was designed to inflame fears in the U.K. of domination by the Germans and the French if Britain joined the Common Market. The progressive movement had instructions to support anti-Marketeers in the Labour Party, regardless of their sympathies on other issues. There were also plans for undermining the position of trade union leaders who favoured the Common Market. The Russians went so far as to instruct the Czech Ministry of Foreign Trade to show favour, in their dealings with British firms, to those who were against the E.E.C. We drew up an index of companies, which recorded their attitudes on this question.

We Czechs also made plans, in concert with the Russians, to use our agents of influence inside Europe to oppose British entry. One of

them was a leading and extremely influential member of the Italian Christian Democratic Party. In 1964, the Military Committee decided to recruit him by using compromising material we possessed about his financial affairs and his former involvement with the Nazis.

Obviously the details of the Strategic Plan for Britain have altered since I left Prague, but I am convinced that the basic objectives have remained constant. I remember the Plan concluded that it was essential to 'activate the progressive movement and the working class' and to 'capture middle-class support for the social and political changes necessary to achieve Socialism in Great Britain'. The Soviet Union and its allies have certainly activated the working class, and have captured a large measure of middle-class support for, or at least acquiescence in, social and political changes.

The Soviet planners considered that the success of their strategy in Britain was fundamental to the achievement of 'Global Democratic Peace'. I believe they have some reason for satisfaction.

For most citizens of the Soviet bloc Australia is a remote land whose only importance is as the destination for some relative who has managed to obtain permission to emigrate. However, for the authors of the Plan, Australia is the 'Strategic Hinterland'. It is both an integral part of the Western Alliance and the stepping stone to Asia.

In Marshal Grechko's analysis of the major Warsaw Pact exercise named 'Vlatava' he said, 'Comrades, to forget Australia and treat it as a forgotten island would be a great strategic mistake.' And in 1967 Boris Ponamarev told us, 'Comrades, I can understand your view of Australia as a country of little importance to your concerns; I must tell you that you are wrong in this and that you have an important part to play in our operations against this country. You must understand that if we wish to control Asia we must first control Australia.' These startling revelations about the true Soviet view ot Australia were clearly confirmed to me when I saw them set out in specific and unambiguous terms in the outlines of the Strategic Plan.

According to the Plan, the neutralization of Australia and New Zealand will follow the neutralization of Western Europe. Like Europe, Australia will advance to Socialism and 'neutralism' step by step, and it will only be in the final stage that a revolutionary government will be established. In this respect the Strategic Plan

estimated that the revolutionary process in Australia would be approximately five years behind the same series of events in Western Europe.

In this process the Strategic Plan aims to exploit the internal forces in Australia by infiltration and deception rather than by a major military threat from outside. Because of the small size of the Communist Party of Australia, the Plan called first for the exploitation of the extreme left of the Australian Labour Party, infiltration of the younger working class in the industrial areas, and, of greatest importance, subversion and control of the trade unions. At the next stage the Plan called for the infiltration of the Liberal and Country Parties, followed by the compromise and overthrow of their established leadership. The final and most difficult target would be the military forces. The guidelines set out in the Plan indicated that although the armed forces should be infiltrated by the intelligence services and the Party, the intention would be to achieve their neutrality in the final stage of revolutionary conflict rather than attempt to turn them into an instrument of the forces of the left.

Once Soviet influence is finally established, Australia would be used both as a base for further operations against the countries of south-east Asia and as an important element in the 'half circle of steel' round China. According to the timing of the Strategic Plan that I studied in the 1960s, the 'liberation' of Australia was to be accomplished by the 1990s. Undoubtedly this timing will have been revised. Nevertheless, the current state of tension which exists between the Soviet Union and China, and their surrogates in southeast Asia, make it likely that in the final years of this century the Russians will place an even greater emphasis on pursuing the objectives of the Plan in Australia.

15

America and Canada

When I joined the Communist Party in 1947 the United Stales and Britain shared the leadership in Soviet demonology - notwithstanding the paradox that America and the Soviet Union often combined in operations to reduce British power in the Middle East, as in the creation of the State of Israel and the Suez crisis. But with the advent of the Cold War in the early fifties, the U.S.A. became the leading 'anti-democratic power' and, as was said on many occasions by the Soviet leadership, 'the milestone on the road to Communism'.

This changed, outwardly at least, when Khrushchev initiated his policy of peaceful co-existence. He wanted to achieve an understanding with the United States, in the hope that it would confuse and divide the other members of the Western Alliance and induce them to compete individually for better relations with the U.S.S.R. He also thought that the U.S.A. was prepared to re-think her policy towards Russia in consequence of her reverses in east Asia and the emergence of the Soviet Union as a thermonuclear power.

But the Russians were worried by certain aspects of American policy, notably indications of a United States rapprochement with China, which began with diplomatic contacts in Warsaw between the American and Chinese Ambassadors, before the open split between China and the Soviet Union.

Brezhnev, in his first speech at the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Meeting in Moscow in 1965, said he knew from intelligence sources that the Chinese placed the highest priority on improving their relations with the United States.

'This is in order to balance their own hostility towards the Soviet Union,' he told us. 'Moreover they realize that they must find tech-

nology from sources other than ourselves and our allies, especially for the sake of their armed forces. An understanding between America and China would present the gravest possible threat to the Communist movement. It must be prevented at any price.'

But Brezhnev admitted that the situation confronted the Soviet Union with a dilemma: on the one hand. Soviet policy must contain American Imperialism in Europe and the Third World; on the other, Moscow had to present itself as an alternative partner to Peking.

In Soviet language, Vietnam was the 'visible struggle between Capitalism and Communism' -one part of the invisible war being waged between the two systems. The Strategic Plan noted that the Vietnam war had divided the Western Alliance and created deep rifts, even some antagonism, between the United States and her allies. It had also revealed the weakness of America's military and political resolve. U.S. air power had been impressive, but the U.S. Army had shown itself incapable of dealing with guerrilla warfare. Finally, the Plan concluded that the American military machine was so cumbersome and complex that it would probably be unable to respond effectively to a world war - most encouraging for our forces in Europe.

The planners considered that America's failure, with all her power, to win the Vietnam war would help to undermine the morale of Western Europe. Now that the United States was in range of massive nuclear attack from the Soviet Union, Europeans might well wonder whether the Americans had the will to defend Europe at the possible expense of New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles. My colleagues and I were convinced, even by 1968, that the Vietnam action would be the last local war that the Americans would fight outside their own hemisphere. In Europe, of course, they would fight, but only as long as N.A.T.O. existed.

Soviet ambitions towards the United States were aimed at the extinction of Capitalism and the 'socialization' of America, which the) believed would be the last surviving dinosaur of the Capitalist System. The main strategic goals on the road to their fulfilment were: the withdrawal of the U.S.A. from Europe and Asia; the removal of Latin America from the United States' sphere of influence and its incorporation into the Socialist bloc: the destruction of United States influence in the developing world; the reduction of American military power to a state of strategic inferiority; the advent to power

in Washington of a transitional liberal and progressive government; and the collapse of the American economy. The Soviet planners speculated that the United States would reach a 'pre-revolutionary situation' by about 1990.

The Ideological Department of the Czech Central Committee was frankly sceptical about these Soviet projections. To us Czechs the United States seemed a great and stable monolith with far greater powers of resistance than the Russians calculated. Konstantin Katushev, Secretary of the Soviet Central Committee, came to Prague in September 1967 to give us an oral briefing. He countered our scepticism by telling us that the United States was a volatile society.

'It can move to either extreme,' he said, 'as we've seen in the Macarthy period and the Vietnam war. If we can impose on the U.S.A. the external restraints proposed in our Plan, and seriously disrupt the American economy, the working and the lower middle classes will suffer the consequences and they will turn on the society that has failed them. They will be ready for revolution.'

Paradoxically, he went on, America's enormous progress in technology was a de-stabilizing influence because it led to unemployment among unskilled workers and widened the social gap between the technocracy and the masses.

'This phenomenon,' pronounced Katushev, 'is one I consider the United States cannot deal with.' But he admitted that there was a chance that when the masses turned on their society the United States might swing violently to the right.

'It's more likely, however, that a progressive regime will emerge because, in spite of their power, the governing bureaucratic and industrial elite, and the media, are fundamentally liberal in their outlook and ashamed of their failure to solve basic national problems.'

Marshal Zhakarov visited Prague in the same year to bring us orders from the Soviet Politburo to polish up our efforts to recruit 'high-level agents of influence' in the American Government, media, and academic elite to whom power was increasingly passing from the hands of the old industrial plutocracy.

Europe was the principal area in which to reduce U.S. influence in the free world. The Russians planned to play upon the nationalist, bourgeois prejudices of the leading European countries in order to convince them that Europe must strive to become a distinct entity,

separate from the United Slates. This mood must reach beyond any debate on the political union of Europe as envisaged in the Treaty of Rome.

The first casualty of this new nationalism would be the N.A.T.O. alliance. The withdrawal of U.S. forces might be postponed by separate treaties with Germany and Great Britain, but in the end the Russians expected the Americans to retire completely. The Russians predicted that this withdrawal would have a profoundly disturbing effect on the United States, and would greatly encourage the growth of isolationism.

The Russians were concerned that unless the Sino-Soviet dispute was resolved by this time, the United States in a search for allies to counter the spread of Soviet world influence, would try to form a new power bloc with Japan and China. This fear lent urgency to their plans to settle the Chinese problem first, either by military means or by negotiations with the regime that succeeded Mao.

It is worth noting that the Russians, for all their intensive studies of the American scene and their attempts to influence events in their favour, were capable of gross errors of judgment. A classic example was their attitude towards Richard Nixon. He was for many years their arch-enemy and the last man they wanted to win the 1968 Presidential election. They believed that once he was installed in the White House, he would pursue the Vietnam war to its bitter end, even using nuclear weapons to achieve victory. They assumed his Presidency would reverse the course of peaceful co-existence and freeze Soviet-American relations for years ahead, a disastrous situation for the Russians because of America's central position in their world strategy. They also believed that Nixon would not only pursue friendly contacts with Peking, but even provide China with nuclear weapons.

Yet within five years of his election, Nixon had become so indispensable to the Russians that they did everything possible to bolster his international prestige, including a summit meeting in Moscow to counter the effects of Watergate.

According to Soviet analysis, Latin America was going through a stage of 'proletarianization' as cities grew at the expense of the rural population. A new radical generation, strongly anti-American, was

taking over the tired old nationalist parties like the Peronistas. The only barriers against change were the armed forces, and they could be either the catalysts of social revolution or the bulwark of reaction. They were to be our major target for subversion.

The Russian aim was to put progressives in power, using the tactics of 'national fronts', and to convert the Organization of American States into an anti-American body. The Kremlin believed in a concerted approach to American revolution, not the Castro method of subversion country by country. They recognized that the U.S.A. was likely to protect its interests in Latin America by military means; but she would be swimming against the popular tide and probably courting military disaster. Moreover, the Russians thought that reaction at home against such adventurism could speed the rate of 'progressive' change in the U.S.A. The Plan predicted that most Latin American countries would pass from the feudal stage directly to Socialism, dealing the U.S. economy the last of many deadly blows.

The Soviets considered Canada one of the 'softer' members of N.A.T.O. and thought she would probably leave the Alliance once Italy and the Scandinavian countries had defected. They reckoned that her links with the destiny of Europe had become weaker since the Second World War, and that Canadians were increasingly questioning their commitment to the defence of a continent which was no longer vital to their interests. The Russians believed that Ottawa regarded N.A.T.O. as just another American attempt to dominate the Western community, which was irksome to Canada's sense of national identity.

As U.S. power faded in the world, the Russians believed that the Canadians would aggressively proclaim their nationalism, probably by nationalizing U.S. property. Because of the wide extent of American investment in Canada, this action would amount to Socialization by the back door. Kosygin, at an economic meeting in Prague in October 1967, remarked that the Warsaw Pact must be ready to develop economic and commercial connections with Canada, however unprofitable they might be, in order to bolster those who advocated Canadian autonomy from the United States. The Russians also wanted to acquire Canadian technology, which was

easier to come by than American, and, of course, the Soviet Union consumes large quantities of Canadian grain.

The Strategic Plan was not, of course, confined to Europe and America; it dealt exhaustively with Asia and Africa as well. But I don't propose to strain the reader's patience further by giving the details, especially since there have been so many fundamental changes in the situation in both continents since I defected.

16

Disenchantment

Before I trace in detail the steps which led to my defection, I want to refer to my personal feelings about the positions, privileges, and power that I held under the Communist system.

At the beginning, between 1947, when I joined the Party, and 1956, I did not consider I was exercising personal power. 'It is Party power,' I thought. And that continued to be my view, even when I was elected in 1954 to the Central Committee, the highest position in the Party, I was told. By then I had learnt that there were two Marxisms: one for the Party leaders and the members of the Central Committee; the other for the Party rank and file and the people. That was when I began to change, for I realized that the first kind of Marxism was not what Marx and Engels had taught me; it was simply the bourgeois life of enjoyment. Even so it took me time to change.

I concluded that 1 had two choices: either to continue to work hard, as a fanatical Communist, which would be a stupid choice; or to relax and enjoy life like the other Party leaders; in fact, to cash in on the great deception. But I changed more rapidly after 1956, when I had been in the U.S.S.R. and talked every day with Soviet military and political leaders. I was shattered when I saw that their lifestyle was the same as that of the nobility in Tsarist days. I am sure that they treated the poor worse, and spent money with more abandon, than in the West. This was a genuine shock to me, for I had always thought that the Soviet leaders lived as simply as the workers; I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw their way of life.

Again, I had only two choices: either I could quit, in which case not only would I myself be finished but so would my family,

especially as I knew too much; or I must lead a double life - on the surface, the official Party life, but privately the life of a pleasure-seeking bourgeois. I chose the second alternative, the double life.

But inside I was very disillusioned, more so alter I had learnt about the Soviet Strategic Plan for my country. I often discussed it with my close friends, and all of us were deeply pessimistic. Knowing the plans of the Soviet Marshals as we did, we had to admit there was no chance of Czechoslovakia becoming a free country in five, ten, or even twenty years. Even the most pro-Soviet members of our military establishment were bitterly disappointed; but they knew there was nothing they could do.

The further I advanced in the Communist Party, the more I understood that the Communist system was a self-serving bureaucracy designed to maintain in power a cynical elite. During my early years of struggle for the Party I believed firmly in Marxism-Leninism, and closed my eyes to practices which later became abhorrent. I have written about my campaigns for the Party as a young man before the coup of 1948, when it was engaged in a life and d e a t h struggle with the Social Democratic Parties. Even after the coup of February 1948, we lived in a continuing atmosphere of crisis and fear that we were surrounded by enemies, as indeed we were — enemies of our own making!

It stimulated my idealism during this period to know that more than 70 per cent of the new settlers in my region of Horosovsky Tyn were Communist sympathizers. We had no problem in recruiting cadres and there was genuine competition for places in the Party, a marked contrast to the tired system of 'democratic centralism', or central selection of candidates, which prevailed throughout the country later on, when the Party was firmly established.

By 1950, when I was conscripted into the Army, I had made up my mind to seek a career in the Party. Like most young men, I found the Army a tedious but unavoidable duty, and looked forward to getting it behind me as soon as possible. I welcomed my transfer to the Commissars School in January 1951. I was interested in Party affairs and felt the School would help to compensate for my lack of formal education. Most of our time there was devoted to political studies. This was a more attractive opening than the only alternative, the School for Commanders. I had no interest in military affairs, and my slight build hardly suited me for field command.

I had some illustrious fellow students. In my class of ten was Professor Vladimir Ruml, already a leading Party ideologist then and later a member of the Central Committee and Director of the Institute of Marxism. In the next bed to me was Karel Kosik, who later became a leading liberal Marxist and fell into disgrace after the Prague Spring. Across the room was Voytech Mencl, who was the most prominent liberal in the Czech armed forces before the Soviet invasion of 1968. Another student with considerable Party experience was Jaromir Ob/.ina, later Minister of the Interior and a member of the Central Committee.

I was the only country boy in this collection of young Party talent, but a common bond between us was our desire to return to civilian life. I learned a great deal from my association with these colleagues, and even taught them a little in return. Only Obzina had as much experience as I in the practical side of Party organization and in the struggle for power in the streets. After Commissars School we all dispensed to regimental duties as political commissars or propagandists, to complete our two years of service.

My rustic naivety managed to survive the cynical way in which I was elected to Parliament and to the Central Committee in 1954; but it received the first of a series of shattering blows in 1955. The occasion was a meeting of the Central Committee to discuss agriculture and nutrition. The Government had closed a large number of sugar refineries, a move that obliged the peasants, including many in my own constituency, to transport their beet to distant mills for processing.

I criticized Ludmila Jankovcova, Deputy Prime Minister and member of the Politburo with special responsibility for food and agriculture, for this short-sighted policy, and I received some open support from other members of the Central Committee. But Jankovcova cornered me at the first coffee break.

'Who *gave you* the right to criticize a member of the Politburo?' she demanded, and continued in a caustic tone, 'You only see the local view, you don't know the national picture.'

'I'm here in Prague to defend the interests of my constituents." I answered stoutly, 'not to sympathize with your problems.'

This was heresy. Jankovcova was formerly a Social Democrat, but she had learned a lot from her new comrades. 'You're practising "mass policy",' she told me grimly. 'Your job is not to tell the Party

what the masses want, but to explain the Party's policy to the people.'

Novotny, though I scarcely knew him then, adopted a more paternal attitude, and took me aside for a few words.

'Really, Jan,' he said gently, you must get to know the difference between a local Party meeting and the deliberations of the Central Committee.'

Much more direct advice came from General Zeman, Chief of the Main Political Administration: 'If you want to continue your career, shut up!'

I began to wonder if I really understood Marxism. Nevertheless, it marked the start of my apprenticeship in the mechanics of power and the making of Party policy.

Khrushchev's famous speech about the evils of Stalinism came as a severe shock to my faith in the Party. But this was nothing compared to the horrors I uncovered when I opened the fourteen safes used by Cepicka. I have already mentioned the list of names of people falsely imprisoned, many of them Communists, and the harrowing letters from the death cells and from the families of the condemned. Some cases were described in clinical detail.

I recall the affair of Colonel Vasek, an officer on the General Staff whom the Secret Police considered dangerous because he was not in sympathy with Communism, though he was highly regarded by his brother officers. Two members of military counter-intelligence visited him one night in 1949 when he was working late. They let themselves into his office, where they accused him of being a British spy. When he protested his innocence, they beat him unconscious, only to revive him with cold water. They repeated the process five times until, as dawn broke, they realized he would never confess. And so they dragged his unconscious body to an air shaft and threw him five storeys to the ground; then they backed a truck into the inner courtyard of the General Staff building, retrieved the body, and took it to the crematorium, where they burned it and scattered the ashes.

The Secret Police visited Vasek's wife, by whom he had two children, and told her he had defected to West Germany with his secretary. They were very convincing, and in her anger and distress she accused him of pro-Western sympathies and activities. Her accusations were, of course, taped, and they appeared as evidence

that afternoon before a hurriedly assembled military tribunal, which found Vasek guilty of treason and condemned him, retrospectively, to death. The murder was legalized in just eighteen hours.

Another innocent officer who had played an active part in the anti-Nazi underground was arrested on his way home from work, and given the 'step by step treatment'. Bound hand and foot, he was shoved into a potato sack and dropped into the river; after each immersion he was invited to confess. Few people can endure this for long, but this man drowned at the second immersion.

The Zalocnici case involved twelve officers of the pre-war Czech Army who were arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned in a concentration camp in Germany; among the inmates was Cepicka. These officers became members of the underground Communist Party in the camp, and after the war they rejoined the armed forces, where they held ranks from Army major to colonel in the Air Force. One Sunday in 1949 they were invited individually for personal interviews with the Cadres Administration of the Defence Ministry in Prague. On arrival they were arrested, tried as Western spies, and executed that day, after digging their own graves in a forest about fifty kilometres from Prague. The link between them was their suspicion that Cepicka had collaborated with the Nazis in the camp. In 1953 Cepicka had the bodies exhumed and secretly cremated.

Novotny's refusal to take action against Cepicka and his decision to cover up the evidence fed my disillusionment, which grew gradually into cynicism and disaffection. The Cepicka affair changed my idealistic view of our Czech leaders, and indeed of the Party, for it was clear to me that the whole Party apparatus had been responsible for these murders. With shame I recalled the lists of bourgeoisie to be imprisoned which our district committees had compiled in 1948. Novotny's attitude showed that Khrushchev's 20th Party Congress had changed nothing; 'the dictatorship of the Proletariat' meant no more than the tyranny of the Party and the Secret Police.

After the Czech Party Conference of 1956, our leadership was forced to make some concessions to reform in order to quieten the demands for de-Stalinization. It set up a Rehabilitation Committee the same year, under the Minister of the Interior, Rudolph Barak, to examine cases. But they conducted their investigations at a discreet and leisurely pace, which confirmed my belief that the Committee was merely performing a public relations exercise. I came to feel the

same about the 'Parliamentary Committee for the Control of Prison Conditions', which monitored conditions inside the prisons but was not allowed to scrutinize complaints of false imprisonment. I was a member of this Committee. Although its powers of inspection were closely defined and its activities limited to those prisons that the Ministry of the Interior chose to open to us, my position gave me a further insight into the purges.

I saw the cream of the Czech intelligentsia in the prisons at Jachymov, where they excavated uranium for the Soviet Union, and at Pankrac. There the regime had established engineering design and architectural facilities to make the best use of this educated elite. The prize-winning pavilions that the Czechs erected at the Brussels and Expo 67 exhibitions were designed at Pankrac.

The commonest charge was the all-embracing offence of committing (unspecified) crimes against the Republic; this charge produced sentences varying from fifteen to twenty-five years for such misdemeanours as possessing an anti-Communist pamphlet — usually planted in the victim's pocket by the Secret Police, according to my contacts in military counter-intelligence — or making careless remarks in private. Many Communists were in gaol on charges of economic sabotage — scapegoats for Party officials who had failed to reach their targets.

When I returned to Prague after my first visit to Jachymov I commented to a colleague that I would rather shoot myself than be sent there. I soon found it difficult to talk to the political prisoners in our gaols because of my embarrassment at their obvious innocence. Officially, of course, there are no political prisoners in Czechoslovakia, only criminals guilty of 'anti-democratic crimes'.

The youth prisons were a revelation. They were full of the sons and daughters of Party officials, military officers, and state security cadres, serving time for anti-social activities such as absenteeism, alcoholism, and desertion. The main prisons for female political prisoners were Pardubice and Zelezovice, the former housing leaders of the Socialist and People's Parties. Most of the women in gaol had received long sentences because they were the wives, secretaries, or assistants of men convicted of 'anti-democratic crimes'. Both prisons also contained women and girls gaoled for shorter terms, up to four years, for being related to someone who had defected or tried to defect.

In the Ministry of Defence we had a special Rehabilitation Committee whose purpose was to restore military rank to those who had received political rehabilitation. I well remember Joseph Smrkovsky, one of the leading liberals of the Dubcek period, whom I interviewed. When he was shown into my office he stood smartly to attention, eyes front, in the traditional military manner. Rather uneasily, I told him to relax and sit down because we were all comrades. It turned out that Smrkovsky was only very recently out of prison, where he had had to come to attention whenever addressing or even passing an officer, and he still instinctively reacted to authority in this way. Prisoners, he told us, not only had to halt when a prison officer passed, but had to follow him with their eyes until he had gone by. Gradually Smrkovsky unwound and talked at length about his treatment in prison and his interrogator's efforts to make him confess. They included making him stand for long periods up to his chest in freezing mud. It was obvious that he hated the Novotny regime and was going to fight it. In his first meeting with Novotny and the Interior Minister, Barak, of which the latter gave us an account at the Military Committee, Smrkovsky thanked Novotny for his rehabilitation, but pointed out that thousands of other innocent prisoners were still in gaol. Barak gave him some friendly advice: to keep quiet, or he would go back there.

The Russian Army left Czechoslovakia in 1945 and did not return until their invasion in 1968. But after the Communist coup of February 1948, the Russians pulled all the strings. For the majority of Czechs, Soviet Imperialism was invisible until the tanks rolled again through the streets. Even I had no idea of the degree to which the Russians controlled my country until I became Chief of Staff to the Minister of Defence.

The machinery of Soviet control operates at the highest levels of Party and Government. The most comprehensive supervision emanates from the Politburo and the Party apparatus of the Central Committee of the Soviet Party, which constantly guides and monitors the work of its satellites. The Soviet Ambassador in Prague is the representative not only of the Soviet Government, but also of the Central Committee of the Soviet Party. He has the power to intervene directly with the First Secretary and with the Heads of Department of Central Committees, as well as all Ministers. He receives an advance copy, in Russian, of all documents considered by

the Czech Politburo, and he exercises his authority both personally and through his staff, who have unlimited access to their equivalents in the Party apparatus and the Ministries.

The Russians have their own representatives stationed inside the Ministries of Defence and Interior. In Stalin's time they had them in the armed forces from battalion level upwards. There were K.G.B. advisers in the Ministry of Interior from district bodies right up to headquarters; the senior K.G.B. adviser had an office next door to the Minister. One of Khrushchev's reforms in 1957 was to remove the majority of these Soviet advisers from our Army and from the lower levels of the Ministry of the Interior. Their titles were changed to 'Representatives of the Warsaw Pact' and their duties to 'coordinating policy at the highest level', but their powers remained the same.

Although Khrushchev withdrew his advisers from the Economic Ministries and the State Planning Commission, Comecon provided the Russians with all the machinery they required to control the various aspects of our economy. As a matter of routine, our economic plans had to be approved in Moscow. For example, in 1966, in accordance with a decision of our Politburo, we opened discussions with the British Aircraft Corporation for the purchase of VC10 passenger aircraft for Czechoslovakian Airlines. A few days before the contract was due for signature the Soviet Ambassador Stefan Chervonenko called on Novotny to advise him not to conclude the purchase. Czechoslovakia could not depend on foreign aircraft for the transport of troops in time of war, he said, and the Russians would interpret this purchase as sabotage of the defence of the Warsaw Pact. Moreover, he warned Novotny that if his advice went unheeded, the Russians would take economic reprisals by refusing to buy our Czech military trainers and the electric trains and other equipment they had ordered from Skoda. Naturally Novotny gave in, and we never signed the contract.

By 1964, Czechoslovakia was beginning to suffer serious inflation as a result of the switch to heavy industry inspired by the Soviet Union, and the huge balance of payments deficit we were running with the U.S.S.R. Our massive arms purchases helped to sustain this deficit. The country was choking in bureaucracy because our centralized administration gave powers of decision over the smallest units of production to anonymous Party officials in Prague. Finally,

Novotny set up a committee to prepare proposals for economic reform. But there was general dissatisfaction; it was impossible to confine criticism to the economy. Intellectuals in the Party were restless at the lack of fundamental freedoms and the Party's interference in everyday life, and Party discipline began to suffer. Despite all efforts, it became difficult to recruit younger people into the Party, whose membership was ageing fast. We therefore made a special attempt to sign up conscripts in the Army; but we soon discovered that they were destroying their membership cards on demobilization and not reporting to their local Party. And so we had to institute a system whereby the political commissars posted the cards to the men's local Party Secretaries.

The Army was over-extended because men were pressed into service to make up for the deficiencies in the economy. Each conscript spent five months of his two years' service on agricultural and building work. As a result, military training suffered, which our officers tried to conceal by subterfuge. For example, each soldier had to explode a fixed number of hand grenades each year; some commanders ordered their ordnance officers to explode several thousand grenades together, with one charge, to get rid of them in order to fudge the training reports convincingly. One Divisional General concealed his troops' lack of firing practice by training a team of crack marksmen, whom he transferred from one battalion to another to satisfy the annual inspections.

I was Chairman of the Technical Sub-committee of the Agricultural Department of Parliament. Some of the wastage we uncovered would have made Lenin weep. A steel foundry for agricultural machinery built in Moravia at a cost of nearly $450,000 went out of action for two years because, in order to save money, the Minister of Hen y Industry had decided not to roof in the compressors, which consequently rusted. When I upbraided the Minister before my Committee, I was summoned before the Disciplinary Committee of the Party. They told me that the Minister had acted in accordance with Politburo instructions to save money, and if I criticized him too intemperately again I would be expelled from the Party.

When I saw more than 500 brand-new balers rotting in a field in my own constituency of Litomerice, I demanded an explanation from the chief of the agricultural machinery station involved. He told

me that the balers did not work, but he had nevertheless been obliged to accept them under the current Five-Year Plan; he was waiting for them to rust a bit more before taking them to the scrapyard. I had another row with the Minister of Heavy Industry over this affair.

'I have thousands of these machines on my hands,' he answered me heatedly, 'and *none* of them work!'

'They why do you produce them?' I asked.

'Because I have to meet my target under the Five-Year Plan.'

17

The Gathering Storm

By the beginning of 1967 the Party's grip on political events was perceptibly slipping. A kind of paranoia seized the Party apparatus, which was dominated by the hard-liners, led by Miroslav Mamula, head of the key Administrative Department of the Central Committee. This department controlled the armed forces, the People's Militia, the Ministry of the Interior, the Secret Police, and the judicial system. We found out that Mamula had gone so far as to bug the headquarters of the Central Committee, so deeply did he distrust the liberals. He had never been in the Army, but he meddled in its affairs and undermined its morale. At last, in the spring of 1967, General Prchlik and I flew to Moscow for a discussion with General Yepishev on military affairs. We chose what we thought was an appropriate pause in the proceedings to tell Yepishev that we thought Mamula should be removed from the Administrative Department because he did not understand military matters. Yepishev listened carefully, and politely allowed us to finish. Then he spoke in his usual soft voice. 'We trust Comrade Mamula absolutely. I advise you to keep your hands off him.'

Prchlik was so despondent after this reply that he whispered to me in the corridor, 'I'm going to ask Novotny for a quiet diplomatic slot somewhere, because you and I are finished.'

The notorious Congress of the Union of Writers in June 1967 demonstrated the disaffection of Czech intellectuals with Novotny and the Soviet dictatorship. It was this Congress that provocatively called for full diplomatic recognition of Israel and the rupture of relations with Nasser. By then it was abundantly clear that momentum was building up for the removal of Novotny, as the one

measure on which all the critics might agree. The Central Committee held a meeting on 26 and 27 September to discuss methods of countering Western propaganda and protecting Socialist standards. The meeting decided to step up our own propaganda and purge the media of dissidents, but its main result was to show that, other than propaganda, the Party leadership could oiler no way out of our economic and social difficulties.

There was another Central Committee meeting on 30 and 31 October to discuss how to improve the position and role of the Party. It came to life suddenly with a speech from Aleksandr Dubcek, first Secretary of the Slovak Party and member of the Politburo, which he had prepared with the collaboration of his Party Secretaries. Dubcek complained that the leadership blamed all Czechoslovakia's problems on Imperialist subversion, when most of them arose from our own mistakes and stupidity.

He went on to demand greater autonomy for the Slovak Party, and an improvement in the quality of the collective leadership. The First Secretary of the Czechoslovakia Party, he suggested, should be only first among equals. Novotny in his reply managed to enrage all the Slovaks by saying that the Party knew how dangerous Slovak nationalism had been in the past - a tactless reference to the purges of Slovak leaders in the early 1950s. But the vote went overwhelmingly against Dubcek, although he received the backing of six other members of the Central Committee, including the leading liberal, Frantisk Kriegel, and the Slovak hard-liner, Vasil Bilak. This was an unprecedented demonstration against the Party leadership, although the record showed, of course, that the vote against Dubcek was unanimous. Even more significant for Novotny's future was an apparently harmless clause buried in the middle of the final resolution, asserting that the accumulation of functions by any one person was against the interests of the Party - a clear threat, although he failed to see it, to Novotny's position as President and First Secretary.

In early November, the political situation rapidly deteriorated with students' demonstrations in Prague. The cause of their grievances was the bad management of their dormitories, which went without warm water, and even light, for long periods. The students decided to march to Hradcany Castle, the President's official residence, to see if the President was any better off. Their

slogan was, 'Is there any light in the Castle?' Novotny, who was ill with sciatica, later told me that he had asked Vladimir Koucky, one of the Secretaries of the Central Committee, to talk to the students and assure them that their conditions would improve. He hoped to forestall what was essentially a light-hearted demonstration. But Koucky failed to defuse the situation. The Soviet Ambassador Chervonenko telephoned Koucky to demand that he take action. The Czech leadership, worried that the Russians might conclude that Czechoslovakia was out of control, told the police to disperse the demonstrators - which they did, with great violence.

There was instant public reaction throughout Czechoslovakia. The Judicial Committee of Parliament - I was a member of it — demanded an immediate investigation, a demand which was unprecedented. The police and the management of the student dormitories were severely censured, and the incident unleashed a storm of debate in Parliament on the state of the country and the Party. In the Presidium of Parliament Kriegel called for a democratic electoral system. He said he was tired of the lie that he had the support of 99 per cent of his constituents, and he would not stand again unless the situation was changed — as indeed it was when the Russians threw him out of Parliament in 1968. My old friend Joseph Boruvka castigated the Party for its economic failures.

'Wherever Socialism steps,' he ended his speech, 'the grass ceases to grow.'

Three groups began to emerge out of this turmoil. First, the hard-liners, led by Drahomir Kalder, a member of the Politburo and Secretary of the Central Committee, and Alois Indra, member of the Central Committee and Minister of Transport. They believed Novotny was too weak to halt the increasing liberalization. Secondly, there were the centrists, led by Aleksandr Dubcek and Martin Vaculik, who wanted to reform the Party without destroying its traditional leading role. The third group, the liberals, were a loose coalition of people who wished to democratize the Party by restricting it to the provision of strategic guidelines for running the country, and by removing its pervasive control over everyday life. The most prominent of them were Kriegel, Zdenek Mlynar. Secretary of the Judiciary Committee of the Central Committee and a signatory of Charter 77, Joseph Boruvka, and Otto Sik. The only point on which all these groups agreed was that Novotny had to go.

Matters came to a head at a Politburo meeting in December, when Drahomir Kalder proposed that, in order to relieve Novotny, who was getting no younger, of some of the burdens of office, the functions of President and First Secretary should be separated. With this proposal Kalder put himself at the head of the anti-Novotny faction in the Politburo; he received the immediate support of, among others, Novotny's deputy, Jiri Hendrych, Dubcek, Oldrich Chernik, the Chairman of the State Planning Commission, and Jaromir Dolansky. Joseph Lenart, the Prime Minister, led the opposition to Kalder's suggestion, and Novotny himself claimed it was inopportune to make any changes at the top of the Party. The Politburo was therefore split down the middle, but all the powerful Secretaries of the Central Committee were against Novotny, which strengthened Kalder's position.

Having declared their hand, the anti-Novotny group had no alternative but to press on, and the Politburo debate on Kalder's proposal lasted a week, during which it became increasingly acrimonious. At this stage the Russians did not intervene in the debate, but Kalder and his supporters knew that the Kremlin was not against their proposal in principle. Their efforts were intended to restore a strong hand at the Party helm. But their individual motives were mixed. With the exceptions of Dubcek and Lenart, both the pro- and anti-Novotny factions consisted of hard-liners, while Kalder was the toughest Stalinist in the Czech leadership. He had come to the Politburo from the post of First Secretary of the Party in the coal-mining area of Moravska-Ostrava, where he gained the reputation of rising to power on the backs of dead miners.

Hendrych had been Novotny's right-hand man from 1954, since when he had been in sole charge of the Party's ideological and cultural activities. He was a born intriguer who realized that the political turmoil required the sacrifice of Novotny, to forestall more radical changes, and he was angry that Novotny had rejected his proposal earlier in the year to appoint him as First Secretary. Oldrich Chernik was Kalder's protege and had been promised the post of Prime Minister if Kalder became First Secretary. On a visit to Moscow in 1967 Chernik told the Russians that Novotny was in favour of liberalization. At heart he was an opportunist.

Beside these rascals Dubcek stood out as an honest man who sincerely believed Novotny had to go for the good of the Party. He

was a thoroughly decent fellow, very easy to get on with, a man of total integrity, with no personal ambition; but he was unbelievably naive, and his naivety was to cost him his position and nearly his life.

Lenart stood alone among Novotny's supporters as a progressive thinker, especially in economic affairs. In 1966, two years after his appointment as Prime Minister, he assembled many of the bourgeois economists who had been imprisoned in the 1950s and turned them into a think tank to produce ideas for galvanizing the economy. In different circumstances he would have been on the same side as Dubcek, but he feared the influence in the Party of Hendrych and Raider, whom he regarded as especially depraved.

After a week of debate and savage personal criticism, the Politburo adjourned in high ill temper. Novotny immediately rang Brezhnev for support, and the latter flew to Prague on 8 December to attend a further Politburo meeting. Only Novotny and Koucky were at the airport to meet him, because the other Politburo members had not been told of his arrival. Brezhnev told the Politburo that the Soviet Party had every confidence in the Czechs, and that it made no difference to them whether Novotny remained as First Secretary or was replaced. But it was essential that there should be no changes in Czechoslovakia's relationship with the Soviet Union, in Czech foreign policy, or in the leading role of the Party. Brezhnev also emphasized that it was important not to compromise Party unity. Assured by the Czech Politburo that none of these problems would arise, he blandly announced he could not stay any longer because he had to return home for his wife's birthday.

Brezhnev, however, went first to the Soviet Embassy, where he addressed the Committee of Soviet Communists in Czechoslovakia, chaired by General Antonov, Deputy Chief Representative of the Warsaw Pact. As First Secretary of the Communist Party at the Ministry of Defence, I received a briefing the next day on Brezhnev's talk. The General Secretary had given instructions to the Soviet Ambassador and the Soviet military and intelligence representatives in Prague on how to handle the crisis. They should not try to keep Novotny as First Secretary, because his departure would help to unify the Party and maintain the status quo; but he should remain as President. The dangers from liberalization had been exaggerated, he said; the Soviet Union could accept a limited measure of internal

reform, provided it did not affect Czechoslovakia's relationship with the Socialist bloc.

Brezhnev gave the meeting a short list of acceptable First Secretaries. At the head of the list was Dubcek; following him came Kalder, Hendrych, and Lenart. After his talk, Brezhnev returned to Moscow, and the same evening he rang Novotny to assure him of his personal support. In fact, Brezhnev had never forgiven Novotny for his defence of Khrushchev in 1964, and was delighted to see Novotny humbled. Novotny saw through this shallow manoeuvre and was speechless at such double dealing.

The Kalder faction pressed their attack harder, but the Politburo remained deadlocked. The debate was so intense that they forgot to cancel the Central Committee meeting on 12 December, and so all the members arrived in Prague in the middle of the heated discussions. They were sent home again, but they had picked up the rumours flying round the city, and they took the story back with them to the provinces. When the Central Committee reconvened on 19 December, it proved impossible to keep up the pretence of normality.

Novotny opened the meeting by apologizing to the Slovaks for his remarks in October. When the debate was opened to the floor a veteran Communist asked the leadership what was going on and why Brezhnev had visited Czechoslovakia. Prague and the whole country, he said, were seething with rumours while the Central Committee was kept in ignorance. Other members took up the cry, repeating rumours from the streets, like the story that the Army was preparing for military action in support of the leadership. In fact, the manoeuvres taking place in the south which had started the rumour had been planned a year before.

There followed three days of argument, capped by a speech from Otto Sik, in which he said that the Slovaks could not accept Novotny's apology, that Novotny and the Politburo should resign, and that the Central Committee should set up a special committee to report on the crisis and propose two or more candidates for selection as First Secretary by secret ballot. He also suggested cutting the power of the Party apparatchiks at all levels, and transferring it to the elected representatives of the Party; and he proposed giving supervision over the Army and Secret Police to two committees appointed by the Central Committee under the chairmanship of a member of the Politburo.

The speech set off alarm bells in Moscow and the Soviet Party decided it could no longer remain on the sidelines. The pro-Novotny group, with support from the Soviet Embassy, forced through a counter-proposal that the Politburo should be assisted in its deliberations by one representative from each of the eleven regions. Another Soviet-inspired resolution went through limiting the candidates for First Secretary to members of the Politburo and Secretaries of the Central Committee, none of whom — not even Dubcek - was thought to be a liberal.

The Russian Ambassador Chervonenko told Novotny that in this dangerous situation he should not leave office at any price. To gain time to work out a solution and organize a purge in the Party, he said, it was necessary to adjourn the Central Committee meeting until after the New Year. Chervonenko believed a majority on the Central Committee could be swung in support of Novotny. The present opposition to him was an unholy alliance of liberals, centrists, and anti-Novotny hard-liners; his only supporters were loyal to him out of personal affection or fear for their own positions. Chervonenko intended to use the holidays to weld together all the hard-liners and some of the centrists against the liberals. He won his adjournment. The only victory for the liberals was a resolution that after the adjournment every member of the Central Committee and the Politburo must declare his position at the podium.

Before returning home, the Committee agreed not to impart any information about its deliberations to the local Party organizations until the issues were settled. The anti-Novotny faction in Slovakia and Moravia, which included hard-liners like Vasil Bilak, broke the agreement and mobilized the local Party apparatchiks against Novotny. Convinced that he had won, Novotny was contemptuous of reports about this organized opposition, because in the New Year he meant to purge the people involved for factionalist activity. He seemed to be losing touch with reality, but Chervonenko and the Soviet generals were more hard-headed. Christmas was a period of feverish activity on their part. They personally called all members of the Central Committee, generals, and senior officers, with orders to support Novotny. The Minister of the Interior asked Novotny every day for authority to arrest the opposition, but he refused.

It was clear to me from my position in the hierarchy that the armed forces were divided too. In the Army, both the supporters and

opponents of Novotny were hard-liners and were naturally against any changes in the leading role of the Party. The pro-Novotny faction was led by two generals - Vladimir Janko, First Deputy Minister and Commander of the Czech Front, and Otakar Rytir, Chief of Staff of the Czech Army. The latter enjoyed a good deal of respect because he was courageous and outspoken in defence of Czech interests against the Russians, although in 1968 he went over to the Russian side out of hatred for the ex-Fascist General Martin Dzur, who had just become Defence Minister.

Leaders of the anti-Novotny faction were General Dzur, General Pepich, that scourge of my younger days, General Jaroslav Hejna, and General Samuel Kodaj, Political Commissar of the Eastern Military District. Generals Pepich and Hejna were Deputies to the Chief of the Main Political Administration.

The third group in the Army was younger and came chiefly from the ranks of middle-grade officers. It favoured Party reform under a new First Secretary, and its preferred candidate was Joseph Lenart. Its views were roughly the same as the centre group in the Central Committee, of which Bilak and Dubcek were members.

The anti-Novotny faction moved to consolidate its control over the Army before the Christmas holidays. General Kodaj cabled an order to all commanders in the Eastern Military District, which included Slovakia and most of Moravia, telling them to accept orders from nobody but himself, and to assume control over the judicial system, the secret and regular police, and the state attorneys, to ensure no one moved to support Novotny. I received reports from hundreds of officers returning to Prague that Czechs were excluded from Party meetings in this District by their Slovak comrades.

General Hejna personally called all Political Commissars of the Central and Western Military Districts to brief them on the power struggle in the Central Committee. He told them that Novotny was finished, and that they should not obey any orders issued in his name — as First Secretary Novotny was nominally Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. Hejna told them to accept commands only from himself. Meanwhile, in Prague, Kalder's former mistress, Maria Hromadkova, summoned a meeting of the capital's 6th District, to attack Novotny and pass a resolution calling on him to resign.

The anti-Novotny factions also started to make discreet approaches to senior officers to gain their support. It was General

Martin Dzur, then still Deputy Minister under Lomsky, who approached me, inviting me to his office for a friendly glass of vodka. We argued for three hours.

'I know Comrade Novotny has had it,' I told him. 'Indeed I told him so after the 13th Parts Congress - when you were still licking his hoots. What I should like to know is, which side are you on? Do you support the liberals or are you a Kalder man?'

Dzur described Sik, Kriegel, and the other liberals as 'temporary allies' in the struggle against Novotny. 'All these Jews will be disposed of,' he added, 'when Comrade Kalder and his friends are in power.'

'What's the difference between Novotny and Kalder?' I asked him. 'They're cast in the same mould.'

'Ah, but Comrade Kalder will be a strong leader.'

'Kalder is far worse than Novotny,' I retorted. 'I could never support him. What we need is new leadership, not a return to Stalinism and the concentration camps!"

Dzur, however, was not prepared to listen, from his vindictive remarks about General Prchlik, whom he accused of anti-Soviet sabotage in the Army, it became even more obvious that he intended to wipe out the liberals and all supporters of Novotny as soon as his faction had taken over. His final words to me carried a note of exasperation as well as warning. 'Think carefully about your position. If you don't join us I will guarantee you'll have cause for regret before long.'

Miroslav Mamula, head of the Administrative Department of the Central Committee, did his best to rally pro-Novotny sentiment in the Party. He gathered together the heads of the Party's Regional Administrative Departments, ostensibly to'brief them on the Central Committee meeting but really to win them over to Novotny's side. I do not think he had much luck. Novotny's supporters in the Army were largely ineffectual. General Janko, Commander of the Czech front, backed him in response to orders from Marshals Grechko and Yakubovsky, who demanded that he retain personal control of the Czech Army. I do know Janko attempted to affirm his authority. because I found out that he had sent orders to three Commanders of Military Districts and two of the Air Force, binding them to his side. However, the conflict of loyalties never in fact came to the test because Novotny resigned.

These intrigues in the Army caused junior officers in the Ministry of Defence to demand a briefing on the situation from me. At length, in late December, I called some fifty officers together for a meeting, and told them about the struggle in the Central Committee.

'We should remain aloof from this debate,t I told them. 'The leadership question is for the Central Committee to decide.'

Most of them were ready to take up a neutral position, but a few kept on pressing me to comment on some of the wilder rumours running round the streets of Prague, and to state my personal position. Finally I lost my temper.

'I'm not prepared to spread rumour and scandal!' I shouted at them. 'I'll wait for the Central Committee to come to its conclusions. But,' I went on rashly, 'I could never support a man like Drahomir Kalder, who's no more than a primitive gangster![3]

This statement received applause, but General Pepich, who was present, recounted my words to his mistress Maria Hromadkova, who in turn passed them on to her previous lover, Drahomir Kalder. Hromadkova was an important link in the anti-Novotny network; her husband was a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Ministry of the Interior, where he led the Kalder faction, while she also enjoyed close access to the Army through Pepich and Martin Dzur. When Kalder heard of my remarks he flew into a rage, smashed up his office, and told Radko Kaska, his Chef de Cabinet, that the first thing he was going to do after achieving power was wring my neck. Kaska, who later became Minister of the Interior, was a friend of mine, and he approached me that night.

'Mend your fences with Kalder,' he warned.

'I have no stomach for such advice,' I replied.

18

Soviet Interference

During Christmas week of 1967, lights burned late in the Soviet Embassy in Prague as a last-minute effort was made by the Russians to rally opinion in favour of Novotny. Their intention was to win over enough members of the Central Committee to get a six months' postponement of the proposal to separate the office of President and First Secretary, in the hope that it might be less passionately debated.

The Soviet Ambassador Chervonenko actually coached our Chief of Staff General Rytir in the speech he was to make for Novotny when the Central Committee resumed its meetings. He also rang my Minister, Lomsky, twelve times in one week to ensure his support for our First Secretary. Marshal Grechko telephoned him three times for the same purpose. I received five calls from General Yepishev, ordering me to align the Party members at the Ministry of Defence on Novotny's side and influence my contacts in the Central Committee. The atmosphere in Prague was heavy with conspiracy.

It was a time for choosing sides, but few did so out of conviction, most were preoccupied with the problem of survival. Everyone looked over his shoulder all the time, conducting talks out of doors or with a radio playing in his office. In twenty years I had never seen Party conspiracy at this level.

On 3 January 1968, the Central Committee resumed work on the leadership crisis. Novotny discarded his original draft speech attacking Kalder and his friends for factionalism; instead he opened the session with an emotional speech in his own defence calculated to pull the heart strings of his opponents. Trying to appear as a noble

stag at bay, he asked the Central Committee, 'Is this shabby treatment a just reward for the sixteen years I have served you as leader?' Out of 120 members present, only about forty were solidly behind Novotny. The opposition to him covered the whole spectrum of Party opinion, as their speeches showed.

At the end of the first exhausting day, an angry and tired Novotny returned to his official residence in Hradcany and told his wife he was going to resign. Bozena Novotny was a very emotional woman; she had been a maid in Novotny's block of flats during the First Republic, and he had divorced his first wife for her. For months now she had been carefully going through Novotny's mail and destroying all letters from Party cadres urging him to resign. When she heard her husband's news, she fainted. Novotny's reaction was pure burlesque: he telephoned his son - I was in young Antonin's flat at the time - and told him to get a doctor.

'Those gangsters have killed your mother! I was going to resign,' he said, 'but I'm damned if I will now, after the suffering my enemies have caused her.'

The Russians could see that despite their best efforts the Party had reached an impasse. As a last resort they persuaded Novotny to place his position as First Secretary at the disposal of the Central Committee, but not to resign as his opponents demanded. Novotny stuck faithfully to this line and refused to resign. After another day of fruitless debate, it was clear that the situation was changing inexorably in favour of Novotny's most vociferous critics, the liberals. The Russians therefore decided to have the issue brought to a vote and the meeting closed on the third day. In a final effort to bring pressure on the Central Committee, they tried to make the Party apparatchiks in the Ministries of Defence and Interior send the Committee a resolution urging Novotny to stay on.

I became personally involved in this development at 1 o'clock on 4 January, when General Janko told me that, on Chervonenko's instructions, he had asked my office to convene a Party meeting for 5 o'clock to approve a resolution supporting Novotny; he then explained the Soviet plan.

'No,' I told him, 'I can't agree to this kind of manoeuvre. First we must consult the Party members in the Ministry, and make preparations for a full discussion.'

After leaving his office I gathered together the members of my own

Politburo. They saw through Chervonenko's scheme, and endorsed my own view that the Party comittee meeting should be adjourned until 8 o'clock the following morning. In the meantime, we would not approve the resolution in favour of Novotny which Chervonenko had dictated to us, but we would canvass Party cadres in the Ministry for their views on the leadership crisis. It took me until midnight to reach these cadres and get their views, in the light of which I dratted a new resolution, stating that our Party organization looked forward to an early end to the crisis and supported the Central Committee in any decision they might reach.

The next day I began the main Party meeting at the Ministry with an explanation of developments at the Central Committee to date. I proposed that we should set up a special sub-committee to come up with a resolution to submit to the Central Committee. The meeting approved my suggestion and appointed my own assistant as Chairman of the sub-committee; he disappeared into private session with my draft resolution in his pocket.

The first speaker from the floor was General Martin Dzur. He declared that the meeting was illegal.

'You have no right to debate these questions!' he shouted. 'Moreover, Comrade General Sejna is unfit to chair the meeting; only a few days ago he made it clear to me that he regards Comrade Kalder and his supporters as gangsters.'

Most of the other speakers attacked Dzur and rallied to my defence, while Janko was called to the telephone three times by Chervonenko to be asked why we had not sent the resolution he had drafted in favour of Novotny to the Central Committee. Finally, in desperation, Janko made me take a call from General Yepishev.

'If you know what is good for you,' Yepishev told me, 'you will sign the resolution immediately and send it in without further debate.'

'Comrade General,' I replied, 'the sub-committee on the resolution is still in session; there is no way in which I can comply with your request.'

'Your actions,' he rejoined, 'are against the interests of the Party and the Soviet Union.' I knew what that meant.

In my own concluding speech to the meeting I made it clear that we should support whatever leader was chosen. 'We should not take pity on anyone,' I added, in an implicit reference to Novotny. My resolution emerged from the sub-committee substantially un-

changed; it reached the Central Committee two hours after Dubcek was elected First Secretary.

It was perfect farce. Novotny had informed the Politburo that he had decided to put his position as First Secretary at the disposal of the Central Committee, and the Politburo must decide whether he should be confirmed in it, or an alternative candidate nominated. He had scarcely finished speaking when Oldrich Chernik proposed Kalder as First Secretary. Kalder then made the biggest mistake of his career: he began his speech of acceptance by expressing, in the traditional Czech manner, his unworthiness. Novotny immediately took his protestations at face value, and offered the post to Joseph Lenart. The latter rejected it out of hand with the biting reply that he did not want to work with the crooks around him - the normal courtesies had ceased with the long Politburo wrangles in December. Finally Novotny asked Dubcek if he was interested. Dubcek accepted at once and received unanimous endorsement from the Politburo.

In his speech of acceptance he promised to continue Novotny's policies; proposed that the President's powers be strengthened under Novotny; and declared that Czechoslovakia's relationship with the Soviet Union should become stronger than ever. In addition, he proposed to expand the Politburo by including the liberal Joseph Boruvka and two of the centre faction, both of whom had worked with him in the same factory years before. Thirty minutes later Dubcek and his predecessor were in Chervonenko's study, repeating to him their pledges to the Central Committee.

Dubcek's election was the beginning, not the end, of the power struggle. He had the Russians' confidence because he had been brought up in the Soviet Union and completed his education there. During his years of Party service he had always followed faithfully the Soviet line; it was no secret that he visited the Soviet Ambassador daily during the last session of the Central Committee to report events; and he could be presented as a new face.

Yet in spite of his loyalty, the Russians were worried by his lack of resolution. Five days after he became First Secretary I attended a dinner given by Chervonenko for all senior officials of the Ministry of Defence. Dubcek, our host told us, had the full confidence of Brezhnev, and Moscow was sure he would work closely with Novotny. The latter would remain as a strong President, and the

Soviet Party expected us to support both of them because, as we all knew, Dubcek was too trusting and ready to compromise.

'The main problem now,' he warned us, 'is to ensure that Comrade Dubcek is surrounded by reliable Marxists. If he falls under liberal influence, the situation could deteriorate.'

Soviet apprehension increased with the issue of a statement by the Party apparatus on the recent Central Committee meetings; it was circulated to all Party officials for delivery to the membership. It not only dealt with the change of leadership, but gave general guidance on the Party's future economic and foreign policies. There were a few sentences in it urging understanding for the position of other Communist parties, which, though not explicit, were understood by everyone to refer to the Chinese, Rumanian, Yugoslav, and Italian Parties. The Russians interpreted them as a break in the solidarity of the Eastern European bloc, and saw them as a warning of Dubcek's independent road to Socialism.

As soon as General Kuschev, the chief Soviet military representative in Czechoslovakia, saw this part of the statement, he rang General Prchlik to demand an explanation, and advised him to remove it from the text distributed to the Army. Prchlik said he would have to discuss Kuschev's 'advice' with Dubcek. The statement was distributed unchanged, and Prchlik, who sympathized with Dubcek, became Chief of the Administrative Department of the Central Committee in place of Novotny's Stalinist supporter, Miroslav Mamula.

A short time after Chervonenko's dinner party, I had a talk with General Janko in his car. A fussy little man at the best of times, he was on his way to a clinic for medical treatment and evidently in a highly emotional state. He told me he had been approached by Alois Indra, who had just become Secretary of the Central Committee, with the demand that the Army must stop the liberals, or the country would be ruined.

'I was in favour of Comrade Indra's proposals,' he told me, 'and I went to Comrade Ambassador Chervonenko to discuss them. He was totally opposed to involving our own Army in this political struggle because he believes its intervention could lead to civil war - you know, the Army might easily dissolve into Czech and Slovak factions, which would give the Western Imperialists an excuse to interfere. Comrade Chervonenko believes that unless we

can wrest the initiative from the liberals the situation is bound to lead to intervention by the Soviet Army. He actually told me Moscow won't allow the liberals to create another Hungary; they'll step in before the situation comes to a crisis.'

He scowled angrily at the memory. 'I told him that Soviet intervention would mean the end of relations between the Czech and Russian people, and would be a tragedy for the Warsaw Pact. But he was adamant. He insisted the reverse was true and only the Soviet Union could deal effectively with the liberals.'

Indra did not abandon his plan to use the Czech Army, and kept up his contact with Janko in hospital. But the die was already cast.

Chervonenko also told Janko that the Russians expected their protege, Martin Dzur, to become Minister of Defence in succession to General Lomsky. They assumed Janko would stay on as Commander of the Czech Front, but he was a bitterly disappointed man because he had long craved to be Minister himself.

'If Dzur becomes Minister,' he swore, 'I'll kill myself rather than serve under that Fascist.'

This turned out to be no idle threat. In March 1968, Janko shot himself in the temple while seated in the back of his staff car at the Tank Troop Stadium in the suburbs of Prague; he was really a tough man, for when the first bullet failed to kill him he fired a second.

Janko told me the Russians were planning other changes. General Svoboda had told him that he, Svoboda, had been approached by Ivan Udaltsov, the senior K.G.B. officer at the Soviet Embassy and Chervonenko's deputy, in the middle of December with instructions to prepare himself to take over as President in case the Russians could not save Novotny. Svoboda had protested he was too old for the job, and in poor health. But Udaltsov dismissed his arguments and said that Svoboda had no alternative. He was in fact appointed President in March 1968, almost the twentieth anniversary of his other great service to the Russians when, as Minister of Defence and a secret Communist, he had prevented the Czech Army from intervening in the 1948 Communist coup.

Obviously a very dangerous situation was developing. I decided I must talk to Dubcek and warn him. At first I tried to reach him on the telephone, but was always fobbed off by his secretary. Eventually I approached Jan Kolar of the Central Committee, a long-standing colleague of Dubcek, and asked him to arrange a meeting. I

explained to him that I wanted to warn Dubcek about Soviet intentions, but he cut me off, making it clear he did not want to know the details. However, he agreed to help. When nothing happened for several days *I* sent a personal letter to Dubcek's office, asking for an interview, and indicating I wanted to discuss Soviet thinking towards him and our country. I had no reply.

Meanwhile it became obvious that the Russians were suspicious of me. General Kuschev called me to his office to ask if I had spoken to Janko before he left for the sanatorium; since Janko's car was parked at the time in front of Kuschev's office window, there was no point in denying it. Kuschev asked me if Janko had told me about his talks with the Soviet Ambassador.

'No,' I answered. 'We only discussed Comrade Janko's views on the future of Czechoslovakia.'

I could see Kuschev did not believe me, but there was nothing much he could do except try to control his very evident anger.

The tragedy of the Dubcek administration was that, apart from the First Secretary himself, they had no understanding of the Russians. Boruvka, who was appointed to the Politburo in January 1968, was one of my best friends; we had been in Parliament together for fourteen years. I was four years with Kriegel in the Presidium of Parliament. Neither of them had ever worked closely with the Russians, and neither had much idea of Soviet mentality. I spent many hours arguing with both of them about our country's future. They both dreamed of creating the ideal democracy, and they had the ability to make one believe in their ideas. But they had neither the vision nor the experience to understand that the Soviet Union would never permit Czechoslovakia to depart from the principles ol the Soviet Party. Not for one moment did either believe that the Soviet Union would ever intervene in Czechoslovakia with troops.

Ten days before I defected I had lunch with Kriegel and Boruvka. They spoke enthusiastically of reforming both the Party and Parliament, opening the political system to a new Social Democratic-Party, introducing competition into the economy, and making new approaches towards the West. I warned them that the Soviet Marshals would pay any price to stop them because of Czechoslovakia's strategic position and Moscow's refusal to countenance any ideological non-conformity within the Eastern bloc. But I was careful not to mention my conversation with Janko,

because Boruvka, in particular, was so volatile he might have rushed off and denounced the Russians from the rooftops.

Both of them were convinced that I was exaggerating the risk of Soviet intervention. When I reminded them of the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, they told me confidently *I* was wrong. The world had changed, they said: alter crushing the Hungarian revolution the Soviet Party had declared that it accepted the right of each Communist Party to pursue its own national policy.

'They won't dare invade Czechoslovakia in 1968,' they declared. 'because they know what the world will think of them.'

'You've been out of the world too long!' I exploded. 'For the Soviet Marshals there's no difference between 1956 and 1968!'

19

Defection

I first began to think about defecting in the spring of 1967, after the interview General Prchlik and I had in Moscow with General Yepishev, when we sought to have Mamula removed. The meeting confirmed that the Kremlin was totally opposed to any modernization of the Czech Party. Yepishev had made it plain that the Soviet leadership would not deviate from their commitment to the most dogmatic and incompetent cadres in our Party. I myself had achieved nothing in my efforts to persuade Novotny that the times demanded change. I could draw no hope from the liberal faction in our Party because my knowledge of the Russians convinced me that the liberals' inexperience would lead to tragedy. My twenty years in the Party had left me without confidence in the system; I had lost my idealism, as well as my faith in our Party's ability to deal with the problems we were facing, and I was thoroughly depressed by the dead hand of Soviet influence on our Government and society.

I made my first attempt to defect that same spring, when my Ministry decided to send several coachloads of officers to a European Cup football match between the Czech Army team and a Belgian side. I asked Mamula for his permission to supervize this outing and to take my son with me; he refused 'because of the sensitivity of your position'. The coaches were packed with 'reliable' military intelligence officers and trusted Army cadres - I have no idea if they were interested in football.

Later that summer I spoke frankly to my son of my feelings about the system. Immediately, with no prompting, he suggested we should defect - I had not mentioned my earlier effort because it

never got off the ground. I was surprised by his alacrity in suggesting defection; although only eighteen years old at this time, he was evidently as sick as I was of life in Czechoslovakia. He also suggested that his girlfriend, Evgenia, whom he had met in his work in the Czech cinema industry, would be a willing collaborator.

But it was not until the autumn that we first tried to make contact with the West. We were unsuccessful, but the attempt hardened our resolve to continue trying. My future was in peril since I had refused to yield to Soviet pressure to submit a pro-Novotny resolution from my Committee in early January. I could not ignore Yepishev's warning that I would be finished if I did not comply. My attempt later to warn Dubcek about Soviet intentions had obviously attracted the Russians' attention, as was clear from my interview with Kuschev. Indeed, when I attended Chervonenko's dinner party a week after Dubcek's election, the Russians behaved towards me with marked coolness.

I did, however, get one more chance to come in from the cold. Lubomir Strougal, the Secretary of the Central Committee, who was one of Kalder's supporters and in the pocket of the Russians, invited me to a private meeting in his office in the middle of January. A former Minister of the Interior, he was well acquainted with conspiracy: he pulled down the window blind and switched on his radio.

'There was nothing out of order,' he began, 'with that noncommittal resolution your committee submitted to the Central Committee. But you *are* tainted by your friendship with the Novotny family. I'm sure you'll welcome the chance to save your career by coming to the help of the Party. We have to fight on two fronts now, against both the liberals and Novotny, who is not yet finished.

'I believe you're particularly well placed to help,' he continued, 'because you're on good terms with both Novotny and that liberal, Kriegel. With your help, the two can be destroyed in one blow. Despite their radically opposed ideas, they hold each other in high esteem.'

'Do you think I'm a whore?' I snorted.

He did not seem offended. 'I don't think you should let your personal feelings govern your reaction to my proposition. You should do what is best for the Party. Think about it.'

I had a final poignant lunch with Novotny in early February. I had

gone to Hradcany to make my report to him on the Party's work in the Army. As I was leaving, young Antonin ran down to the courtyard to ask me back to lunch. Novotny had overcome the shock of his dismissal from the post of First Secretary and was starting to romance about his role as President.

'I really do believe,[1] he told me, 'that the Party will return me to full power at the next Congress. Our Russian comrades have realized their mistake in allowing the leadership crisis to develop in the way it has, and they have now assured me of their full support.'

He also thought Brezhnev was largely responsible for the crisis in our country. Novotny took a lot of satisfaction from the hope that the Soviet Party might make 'that person' pay for it.

'Stop deluding yourself,' I answered bluntly. 'Power in the Party has always rested, and will continue to rest, with the First Secretary. I doubt if you'll survive, even as President, until the next election.'

'Pessimistic as ever,' he sighed. But when I challenged him to show me where my views had been wrong, he weakened perceptibly, and generously agreed that events had borne out my predictions after the 13th Party Congress.

He had aged ten years in the few weeks since his overthrow; his face was pale and drawn, the skin hung loose on his cheeks, and his frame had begun to sag. I felt sorry for him in spite of my longstanding irritation with his capacity for overlooking inconvenient facts.

Two nights before my defection I attended a cocktail party at the Soviet Embassy in honour of the Red Army. I had to keep up an appearance of normality, lest anyone should suspect my intentions. That same morning, for instance, during another Czech-Soviet celebration, I had delivered the main speech in honour of our perpetual friendship. As usual, I had to conclude my speech by embracing General Kuschev — for the last time, thank God. At this evening party I paraded in dress uniform. The guest of honour was Aleksandr Dubcek, who received the full recognition due to his new rank.

Together with Joseph Lenart and the Novotnys I joined the principal and privileged guests in a room officially set aside for them. Dubcek announced in his toast that the crisis was over.

'I have told our Soviet comrades,' he exulted, 'that the Party will go forward towards Socialism with Soviet guidance and with the

active collaboration of President Novotny! But I hope Comrade Ambassador Chervonenko will understand some changes will be needed to satisfy the Czech people.'

In reply Chervonenko proclaimed that Dubcek had Brezhnev's full support. 'The Soviet Union,' he assured us, 'always applauds any changes to improve Socialism.'

Later, after a lot of vodka, Chervonenko was more frank. He told Dubcek that the Soviet Union expected him to put a stop to the anti-Marxist forces in the Party. Dubcek asked him for time and understanding. Novotny, in a speech which must have stuck in his throat, thanked Chervonenko and Brezhnev for their 'help' in resolving the leadership crisis, which their efforts had prevented from becoming more serious. He looked a broken man. Young Antonin was so angry it was all I could do to stop him making a scene. 'The bastards!' he kept spluttering in a voice that must have carried half across the room. 'The bloody bastards! First they destroy my father, then they make him thank them for it!' It was a strange gathring at that party- full of 'winners' and 'losers'. Even Joseph Kudrna, the Minister of the Interior, predicted he would soon be in gaol. He was dismissed when I defected.

We had postponed our defection several times, but at last, on Saturday, 24 February, my mind was made up for me. That morning I went as usual to my office, where I found my secretary awaiting me with a copy of *Obrana Lidu (Defence of the People),* the official military newspaper. There, on the front page, was an article by General Pepich, who had recently replaced my old friend Prchlik as Chief of Main Political Administration. The article was a general review of the Party's work in the Army, and it announced new guidelines for the future. What caught my eye was the allegation that my Party committee had weakened the fighting spirit and capacity of the armed forces. This amounted to a charge of treason.

I immediately ran up two flights of stairs and burst into Pepich's office, where I dropped the newspaper on his desk.

'What the hell are you up to?' I shouted.

Pepich, who was a time-serving rascal, stuttered incoherently that I had not been named in the article, which was directed against my committee.

'You well know,' I replied angrily, 'that I am responsible for the committee. You've virtually accused me of sabotage!'

He recovered his composure quickly.

'The Party demands to know,' he said quietly, 'all about your intrigues against the present leadership. And you needn't hope that Prchlik will protect you from investigation, because he'll soon be struck down himself.'

'By what right *do you* claim to speak for the Party?' I demanded. The Party will be just as interested in the conspiracy by yourself and the rest of Kalder's clique against the leadership.'

Pepich then challenged the resolution my committee had sent to the Central Committee on the day of Novotny's overthrow, affirming our confidence in whatever decision the Committee made.

'Who was the author,' he asked, 'of the first draft of this resolution - the one favouring Novotny?'

'Comrade Ambassador Chervonenko sent us the resolution. I suggest we discuss the matter with him.'

Caught off balance, Pepich tried to bluster his way out of it. 'It is the mark of all traitors that they try to blame the Russians for their crimes.'

I could take no more of this nauseating lying.

'You gutless clown!' I sneered at him. 'If an explanation is required, I'll supply it to Comrade Dubcek.'

If I had entertained any illusions about fighting for my political life against the Soviet-supported Kalder faction, they were swiftly dispelled when I returned to my office. There I received a telephone message from a member of the Presidium warning me that the Presidium of Parliament would be asked to lift my Parliamentary immunity on the following Monday, in two days' time, so that I might be taken into custody. The Secret Police were to be instructed to implicate me in charges levelled against one of my staff, who had been accused of a black market fraud five weeks earlier. I was myself a member of the Presidium and had received the agenda for Monday's session; naturally it contained no reference to this matter.

I knew only too well that if the Secret Police were told to bring charges against me, they would find the means to make me confess to them; not for nothing had I read all the documents in the Cepicka case.

I continued to work in the office until 1 p.m. and was, as usual, the

last to leave - I must show no sign offear. Hut before closing my safe I removed, for destruction at home, all papers that might be embarrassing to my friends. 1 also took away a selection of documents which I thought might be of interest to the West. Just before I closed my office door, I rang the Secretary of the Presidium to tell him that I intended to visit relatives in West Bohemia for the weekend, and in view of the snow I might be back late on Monday. I asked him therefore to postpone until Monday afternoon the subject I was due to present before the Presidium, and he agreed.

That afternoon I destroyed my personal papers. I told my son Jan to be ready to leave early next morning, Sunday, and to warn his girlfriend, Evgenia, who was coming with us. I chose Sunday because most secret policemen get drunk on Saturday night and so tend to be less vigilant on Sundays. I told no one else in my family about my intentions in order to give the police no excuse to prosecute them for complicity. I was sure my wife would not want to come along; she was a dedicated Party member, and moreover had children from her first marriage and grandchildren from whom she could not bear to be parted. Evgenia gave her room-mate, Eva, the chance to join us because she had tried to help us make contact with the West the previous autumn. But Eva would not come because her sheepskin coat was at the cleaners and would not be ready in time.

We had made no elaborate plan. In my experience, the Secret Police cannot imagine anyone doing this sort of thing without complicated scheming. And so I chose the simplest way. In December I had asked the Foreign Department of the General Staff for passports to allow Jan and me to take a few days' holiday at one of the Polish ski resorts in the Tatra mountains. We were granted diplomatic passports valid only for Warsaw Pact countries, but for all such countries, not Poland alone. We never went to Poland, of course, but I managed to hang on to the passports, and they were still valid. Evgenia had a travel document from the Tourist Bureau, allowing her to visit friends in Bulgaria, for which our passports were also good. To get to Bulgaria you can travel through Yugoslavia, and the law allows you three days there in transit. Our plan was to drive through Hungary to Yugoslavia, and then to the Italian frontier at Trieste, where we proposed to bluff our way through. We were taking nothing with us but the clothes on our backs.

Evgenia and Jan treated the whole business as a glorious joke; after all, they were only seventeen and eighteen years old. Jan slept like a baby on Saturday night, but I was kept awake by anxiety, especially by memories of all those Secret Police prisons I had seen. I could not help wondering whether the next twenty-four hours would see me free, or on my way to the torture cells and eventually the uranium mines. I was tormented, too, by the thought that I was leaving forever my country, my mother, my wife, most of my family, and all my friends. As I stood at the window of my house on a small hill in the 'Little Quarter' and looked across the Vltava River to the lights of Prague spread out beneath me, my tears flowed freely. This is just one of the curses of Communism, that it drives into prison, or into flight from the land they love, those who will not or cannot adapt to its inhuman systems.

I shook Jan awake at 3 a.m., and at 6 we picked up Evgenia outside her flat, opposite the Ministry of Defence. It was snowing, and as 1 put the Skoda into gear, I could see the frost on the windows of my office.

The ancient city of Bratislava, capital of Slovakia, stands at a point on the Danube where the frontiers of Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Hungary converge. It was here that we proposed to cross over into Hungary. The distance from Prague is some 350 kilometres - not as the crow flies, but as the road twists. It was black with ice and I drove with extreme caution, praying the car would stay upright. But when Jan took the wheel he drove like the devil, not out of fear but for the sheer hell of it.

'Isn't this fun, Evgenia?' he would shout happily as the car skidded round a corner, while I momentarily forgot my fears of the Secret Police in a more immediate panic.

'Wonderful, darling!' she would answer, her eyes alight with excitement as we sped past the bare, snow-laden branches of the birch forests on either side of the road. Lovely in summer, they looked dark and unfriendly through the driving snowflakes.

At noon we came to Bratislava, dominated by its great citadel standing square on a high mound overlooking the town. With its high stone walls and four round towers, one at each corner, it has often been compared to an upturned dining-room table. It has an

impressive history. Built on the foundations of an old Slav fort that 1,000 years ago commanded the confluence of the two main highways between the Mediterranean and the Baltic - the Amber Route and the River Road - it successfully withstood siege and assault from Genghis Khan's Mongols in the thirteenth century, the only Eastern European stronghold to do so. During the years of Turkish occupation of Hungary, Bratislava housed the Hungarian Diet that crowned, in exile, the Hungarian kings; in those days it bore its German name of Pressburg. In the castle's famous 'Hall of Mirrors', the unfortunate Austrian Emperor Franz signed the humiliating Peace of Pressburg with Napoleon, to whom he was obliged to give his daughter in marriage. I believe there are old dungeons beneath the castle, inside the great mound, but I did not want to think about dungeons just then.

In one of the smarter restaurants we had a last lunch, an enormous meal washed down with bottles of wine. It was almost spoilt for me by my fear that every other person there must be a member of the StB, but Jan and Evgenia ate like horses and Jan consumed a whole bottle of wine, and a bit more, on his own. Then we bought plenty of salami and bread, and stowed them in the car, because we knew that once we were across the Yugoslav border we should have no valid currency to buy anything.

Perhaps I should have felt bitter regret at this moment. I was leaving forever the country I had lived in all my life, but my fears of being stopped at the border left no room for my earlier pangs. Luckily the weather was on our side; snow and sleet were pouring down. As we came up to the frontier, dim figures, heavily wrapped in overcoats and scarves, with the flaps of their caps pulled down over their ears, emerged reluctantly from the guardhouse. They barely looked through the car window before raising the barrier and waving us through. I started to breathe again, although I knew we still had a long way to go.

We made swift progress across the flat snow-bound Hungarian plain, avoided Budapest and, without a single stop on the way, slipped into Yugoslavia after dark; we suffered no delay at the frontier. On the outskirts of Zagreb we halted to eat some bread and sausage in the car. We drove on through the night, over the winding, slippery mountain roads of Slovenia, and reached the small town of Kopper on the Yugoslav-Italian border opposite Trieste at 6 a.m. on

Monday - exactly twenty-four hours after we had set out from Prague. We waited in some woods nearby until 9 a.m., when the Italian Consulate opened.

At the Consulate a junior official told us Evgenia could have a tourist visa to visit Trieste at once; but Jan's and my diplomatic passports were not valid for entry into Italy. I tried to pressurize the official.

'Why are you discriminating against me, a Member of Parliament,' I demanded, 'when you let any ordinary Czech citizen across the border?'

'I'm only trying to protect you,' he answered. 'If I let you go, you'll be in trouble when you get back to Prague for visiting a Capitalist country.'

I could hardly tell him we were not going back. Eventually he told me to return at 1 p.m., when the Consul himself would be there. The intervening four hours were a nightmare for me. I was expected at the Presidium in Prague at 1 o'clock. They could start looking for me after that, and they could easily telephone the Yugoslav police if they suspected we were there, and have us arrested and sent back.

When we returned to the Consulate we received precisely the same answer. I insisted, however, on seeing the Italian Consul. He was a short, stocky fellow, who, if he had been wearing overalls, could easily have passed as a foreman in the Skoda works.

'It would be dangerous for you to visit Trieste,' he repeated. 'We're only trying to be helpful.'

The back of my neck was damp with sweat.

'The situation has changed in Prague now,' I tried to convince him. 'With Comrade Dubcek in power the rules are much more liberal.'

At last, after half an hour of this sort of argument, he gave us our visas.

Our troubles were not yet over. We joined a queue of cars and buses waiting to cross the frontier. Most of them were taking Yugoslav workers and tourists to Trieste. Slowly we inched towards the inspection point with a guardhouse alongside. When we were almost level with it, a Yugoslav frontier policeman ran out of the guardhouse and motioned us to pull over to one side. If there had not been another car ahead of us blocking the way, I would have put my foot down hard on the accelerator and shot across the thirty-foot

distance between us and the Italian frontier station. The guard told me to join him inside with my papers.

It was already 2 p.m. and the hunt for me must have started in Prague. The guard inspected our passports.

'These are not valid for entry into Italy," he pronounced. 'They require a special permit from the Czech Government.'

Fear spurred me to a fine show of anger.

'Are you an employee,' I demanded in my most sarcastic tone, 'of the Czech or of the Yugoslav Government? I am a Czech Member of Parliament, and I refuse to be treated in this way! I'll telephone the Czech Ambassador in Belgrade, who is a friend of mine, and complain about your behaviour.' He was not impressed.

'Calm down,' he said, 'and don't give me any of that baloney. I know the regulations. I'm going to talk with my superior.'

They both retired to a side room, where I could hear them telephoning for instructions. I was pouring with sweat, but I tried to keep my expression calm. 'This is it,' I thought, 'they'll be calling Prague and that will be the end.'

I was ready to use the gun I was carrying, if there was no other way. If the Czechs caught me and took me back to Prague, they would execute me at once, and I would be lucky if it was quick.

They kept me there for half an hour, the longest half-hour of my life. I could not understand what they were saying, but they had plenty of time to contact Prague. What almost drove me out of my mind was the sight of Jan and Evgenia in the car making faces at me through the window. They were still treating the whole affair as a splendid laugh. They did not know, as I did, that if we failed now their lives would be ruined.

At last the station chief emerged from the side room, and gave an order to his subordinate to stamp our passports. With my legs almost folding under me I rejoined Jan and Evgenia in the car. They were still laughing and hugging each other. The Italian guards, having seen our difficulties with the Yugoslavs, thought they had better hold us up as well. They delayed us for another twenty minutes while they searched the car thoroughly and tried to grill us about our papers - although, since we had no language in common, this last was a bit of a farce. Eventually they wrote in our passports that we were Bulgarians, and allowed us to go on to Trieste.

When we reached Trieste our most immediate problem was to find

a restaurant to refresh ourselves, and a lavatory; it was a long time since we had had the chance to use either. But first we needed money. All we had between us was 200 Czech crowns. It took us two painful hours to find a bank that would change our crowns into lire - at a very poor rate. Then we found a restaurant and lavatory, and felt much better.

It took me until after dark to find the American Consulate, where at first I received a brush-off when I said I was defecting.

'Go to the Italian police.' an official told me. 'They will arrest you, and after three months we will see what can be done about getting you to the States.'

Luckily, soon afterwards I ran into another official who used to be at the American Embassy in Prague, and spoke a little Czech.

'I am a General in the Czech Army,' I said at once, 'and I want to go to America.'

That stopped him in his tracks. He took us straight to the Vice-Consul, who received us warmly, gave us dinner, and kept us in hiding until our American visas were ready; we flew to Washington via Rome. My nightmare was over.